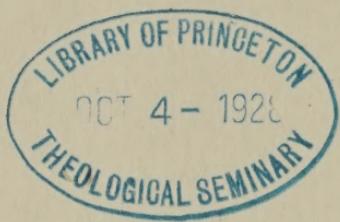


King Arthur and the Holy Grail

Robert Jaffray



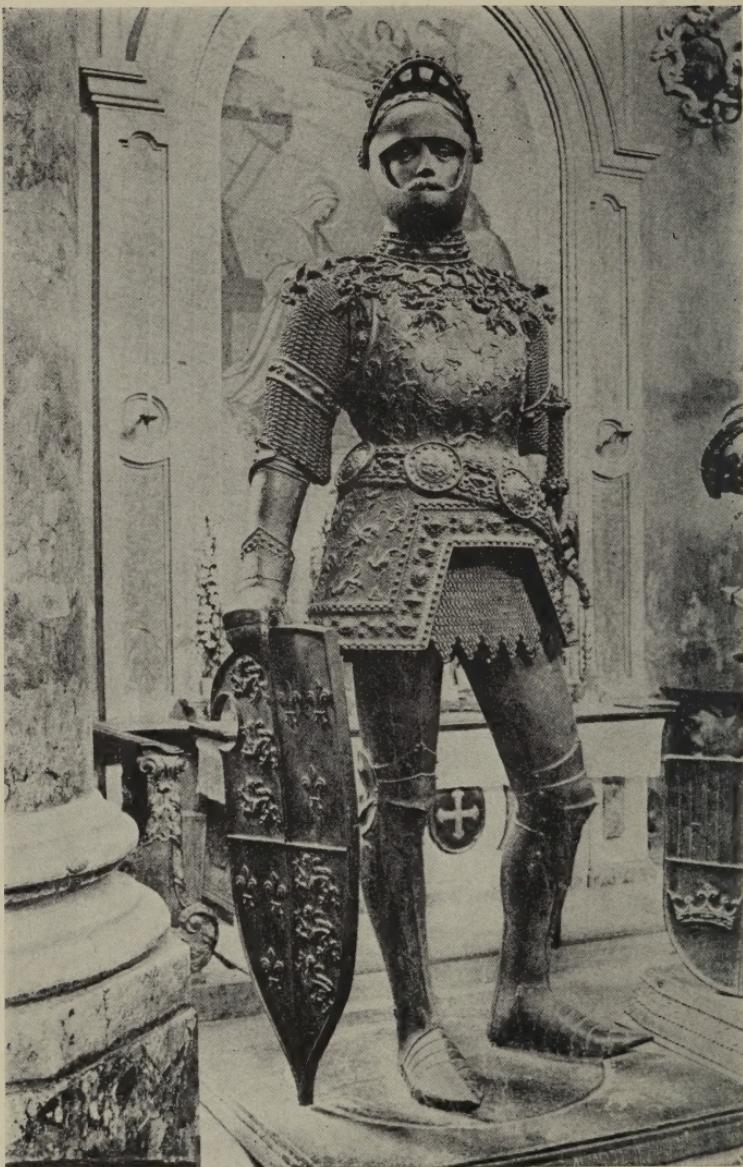
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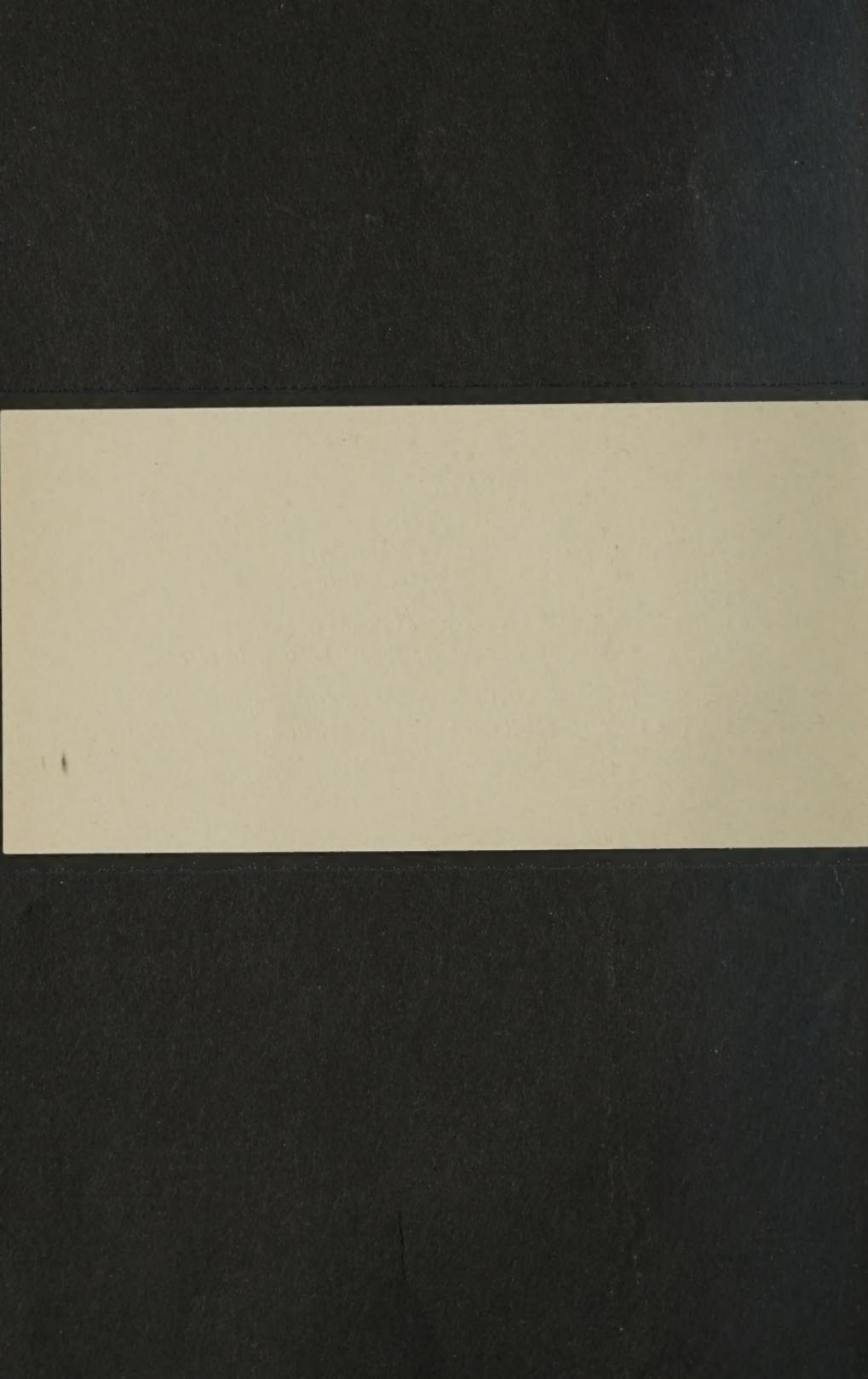
THE TWO KNIGHTS OF THE SWAN
KING ARTHUR AND THE HOLY GRAIL



KING ARTHUR

ERRATA

Page 48, line 19—*fulfilled* should be *fulfilled*.
Page 67, line 13—*Menessier* should be *Manessier*.
Page 153, line 18—*committal* should be *committal*.
Page 164, line 2—*takes* should be *taxes*.
Page 194, line 9—maiden *has* mentioned should be *had*.
Page 219, line 5—*Gawain rode for the* should be *Gawain rode forth*.
Page 225, lines 18 and 23—*Meleagan* should be *Méléagan*.
Page 228, line 13—*Holy spirit* should be *Holy Spirit*.
Page 243, line 10—*Poredur* should be *Peredur*.



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King Arthur and The Holy Grail

*An examination of the early literature pertaining to
the legends of King Arthur and of The Holy Grail,
together with a brief review of the theories relat-
ing to the latter—intended to serve as an
introduction to further reading and
more extended research*

By
Robert Jaffray

G. P. Putnam's Sons
New York — London
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1928

KING ARTHUR AND THE HOLY GRAIL



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One interesting feature may also be mentioned. The literary works which are considered in the following pages include the earliest known writings on the subject, but it is apparent that there were others which have never been discovered; and some of these latter evidently antedate any of the writings which are known. Some references to this feature will be found in the course of our discussions. It is really tantalizing to think of the valuable material which is now out of reach.

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KING ARTHUR AND THE HOLY GRAIL

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

THE enormous amount of literature which treats of the legends of King Arthur and of the Holy Grail may, in a general way, be said to fall into two very different classes:

- (a) Scholarly treatises dealing with the origins of the legends, their earliest forms, and later developments, and the mutual relations of the literary works under examination. These are written *by* scholars and *for* scholars; and they cannot be well understood or appreciated by the average reader who has little or no foundation knowledge of this intricate subject.
- (b) Popular presentations of the narratives intended for the ordinary reader—young or mature, as the case may be.

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The writings which comprise the second of these classes are to a large extent based on the *Morte Darthur* of Sir Thomas Malory, which was written in the fifteenth century, and was itself a compilation of previously existing literature dating, in some cases, three centuries further back. Thus the readers of those works are apt to receive an erroneous idea of the legends through their ignorance of the earliest forms in which the stories appeared.

These current forms in which the legends are popularly known are very different from those in which they appeared in mediæval literature. Our present purpose will be to go back to the beginning, and thus get a better basis for an understanding of the later development.

The traditions about King Arthur and those which relate to the Holy Grail were originally entirely separate, but they were brought together at an early date; other legends were interwoven with them, and have supplied important elements in the resulting growth and development. In studying the origin and development of these legends, the principal field of research is in the literature of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; but nevertheless we find also that important lines of inquiry reach back to a much more distant date.

The original material existed, of course, only in manuscripts; and there has been, inevitably, considerable confusion and irregularity attendant upon the preservation and transmission of this literature. Manuscripts of the same work show notable variations; and this fact creates a difficulty in determining the earliest existing form. Some of the manuscripts are plainly of a considerably later date than that of the original writings which they represent; and in many cases it is very doubtful if the romances as known to us are in their original forms. Moreover, many of the existing manuscripts contain various romances grouped arbitrarily by the copyists, so that the material available for examination does not afford trustworthy evidence of the mutual relation of the romances mentioned. Careless copyists have contributed to the difficulties which are encountered, by making errors which in some cases are easy of detection, while in others they only serve to place additional obstacles in the way of critical investigation. Additions or changes have been made in some of the texts by copyists or revisers, which, of course, increase the already existing difficulties. The same, or very similar, incidents are repeated by different authors but with changed characters or locations. Statements about au-

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thorship or date of composition are found which either refute themselves, or are made of doubtful acceptance by the internal evidence. Many discrepancies are found in matters of chronology and genealogy, which may be merely the result of a too vivid imagination on the part of the writers, or which may, on the other hand, serve as suggestions for the necessity of critical study to discover points of interest not indicated in a cursory examination. Lastly there is at least one instance where a form of narrative, evidently later than that of another writer on the same subject, nevertheless gives evidence to indicate that it may represent an earlier form of the same story.

Further illustrations are unnecessary to show that the critical study of this literature presents unlimited opportunities for investigation. Those who wish to undertake even a preliminary study of that nature will soon find themselves confronted with a network of problems which have engaged the attention of scholars for many years and are still unsolved. There is such a wide difference of opinion on the question of origin, authorship, date, chronological order, and mutual relations of the various romances which require consideration, that we must dismiss at the outset any hope of presenting a definite, clear and trust-

worthy account of this ancient literature. We cannot forget that views once held by those who should be able to speak with authority have been, through later investigations, in many cases modified or disproved.

Turning then from this somewhat pessimistic and discouraging point of view, we find that there still remains a large field of interest that is open to the average reader. Leaving aside the intricate questions of literary criticism except for such brief references as may be unavoidable, we can at least study the narratives of the romances and histories (?) which form, collectively, the foundation on which our modern literature has been built, seeking out for this purpose their earliest known forms; we can give their approximate date and authorship as far as these are known; we can discuss briefly some of the problems suggested by these interesting Legends; and we can thus gather into small compass a considerable amount of information which may serve as a basis for further reading and deeper research. Even the present brief study along these lines will give the reader a glimpse of the wide field which is opened to the student of these Legends. It may perhaps be of interest for the serious student to have this material collected in a convenient form not elsewhere

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obtainable in such detail; but the special object will be to give information to the average reader who may desire to obtain a better understanding of a subject regarding which much misconception prevails, and who does not know where to obtain it. If the result is to kindle a desire for further knowledge, and to act as a stimulant for further investigation, the purpose of this book will have been fulfilled.

It may be well to state also at this point that no attempt is made to present in this volume any definite conclusions in regard to the problems discussed. The field of our investigations is a battle-ground of conflicting opinions; the object of our studies is to stimulate and facilitate further research; and the present writer has considered it wiser to run the risk of criticism for inconclusiveness than to endeavor to maintain any particular theory when scholars are themselves at odds.

It will, of course, be impossible to give the full narratives of the various romances, nor is it desirable to make the attempt. The prolixity of mediæval writers is well known, and their works are, to the modern taste, extremely tiresome. Therefore, we would emphasize the fact that the narratives as given are only in brief outline, and that they contain only the material which seems

to be directly connected with the Legends of King Arthur and of the Holy Grail. Even thus there has been an amount of condensation which might be criticized, resulting in the omission of incidents which in some cases add interest to the narratives; but the field is too large to permit of the inclusion of the complete stories, and it is believed that a fuller presentation is unnecessary for our present purpose.

The early Arthurian material is described in Chapter II; it deals principally with writings of a historical character. On the other hand, in the following seven chapters (viz: III to IX inclusive) a long list of Arthurian and Grail romances is considered. Among these there are some which seem either to relate different versions of the same story, or different stories of the same nature. Thus in those seven chapters there will appear to be a good deal of repetition and dry detail; but it will result from the nature of the case, and we can only crave the reader's indulgence for what has been unavoidable. After this presentation of the narratives of the various romances there will be found in Chapter X a review which attempts to give a brief summary of the most important features in these narratives, and thus enable the reader not only to obtain a better under-

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standing of the narratives themselves, but also to realize more fully the great complexity of the problems arising from the Grail romances. The remaining Chapters (XI to XIII) discuss various matters of general interest suggested by the investigations which precede them.

In presenting these narratives it would be interesting and helpful to give them in chronological order so that the development of the stories might be clearly traced; but this is impossible, since the discussion would raise questions about which sharp differences of opinion exist. In some cases the relative positions of certain romances can be given with a reasonable degree of accuracy, but more than this it is impossible to say.

As we proceed to examine this early literature it will be noted that most of it comprises material relating to both King Arthur and the Holy Grail; but in some instances only the one or the other finds place in the narrative. While the two subjects represent traditions originally separate and independent, the union of these two lines of tradition took place in the far distant past, and the two are as one in the current popular view. Thus they are here treated without any attempt at segregating the distinctively Grail material from that which is distinctively Arthurian.

The interest of a study of this kind is by no means confined to the narratives which will be briefly related in the pages which follow. Much more important are the sidelights which they reveal to him who reads with attention. The early chronicles of Britain are brought to our notice as the source whence we get our first detailed news of King Arthur; the various romances of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries provide the principal field of investigation, and excite our interest and curiosity by the questions arising from the puzzling differences in the various manuscripts in which they are recorded; the close connection in these early times between Wales and Brittany supplies us with many facts of importance connected with the growth and transmission of the Arthurian literature; the pictures of the knights and their exploits stimulate our desire for fuller information about the age of chivalry; the traces of Celtic mythology and folklore suggest additional lines of investigation which are of the greatest interest; and finally we have the mysterious Grail castle—whether at Monsalväschi¹ in the Pyrenees, or at Corbenic in Britain, or on the coast of Brittany—with a ruler, a treasure, and strange ceremonies, all difficult to under-

¹ “Monsalvat” in Wagner’s dream.

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stand, and giving rise to endless discussions between scholars even up to the present day. Surely we need say no more to emphasize the absorbing interest which attaches to the fascinating subject before us.

One interesting feature may also be mentioned. The literary works which are considered in the following pages include the earliest known writings on the subject, but it is apparent that there were others which have never been discovered; and some of these latter evidently antedate any of the writings which are known. Some references to this feature will be found in the course of our discussions. It is really tantalizing to think of the valuable material which is now out of reach.

CHAPTER II

EARLY ARTHURIAN STORIES

THE earliest references to King Arthur which can be dated with a reasonable degree of accuracy is in a Latin Chronicle of the *History of Britain*, which was compiled about the year 800 from pre-existing materials by a Welsh writer named Nennius. After referring to the Saxon invasion under Hengist and Horsa (A.D. 449), Nennius states that, after the death of Hengist (which occurred A.D. 488), his son came from the northern part of Great Britain to the kingdom of the men of Cantia (Kent); and he adds that Arthur fought against them in those days, together with the Kings of the Britons, but that Arthur was a leader in the battles (*dux bellorum*). Twelve battles are mentioned—the last being on Mount Badon—and Arthur was victorious in all of them.

In some of the early Chronicles, not only those prior to Nennius, but also those about contemporary with him, there is no mention of

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Arthur, but he is mentioned in later writings. William of Malmesbury in his history written about 1125, mentions Arthur with commendation, but says that the *wild tales current about him* are not to be taken seriously. Arthur is also mentioned as a prominent King of Britain in the *Chronicle of St. Michael's Mount*, written probably about the middle of the eleventh century. Henry of Huntington in his History written before 1133 tells of Arthur as a military leader and king of Britain.

We cannot depend on the accuracy of the so-called histories of this early period; but, while we have no evidence of unquestioned value to prove Arthur's existence, there is nevertheless a strong probability in his favor, even though he may not actually have been a King of Britain, but only a prominent warrior.

The earliest full narrative of the life and exploits of Arthur is found in a *History of the Kings of Britain* by Geoffrey of Monmouth, who was born about the year 1100 and died 1154 or 1155. Geoffrey's statement is that Walter, Archdeacon of Oxford, gave him a book in the "British" language which he found in Brittany and which told the nation's history from Brute (or Brutus), the legendary first King of the Britons, to Cad-

wallader (seventh century), and that he used the material therein contained. Of Geoffrey's work a number of manuscripts exist, and various translations are available; but his statement, mentioned above, cannot be accepted literally. In fact doubts have been expressed regarding the existence of the book which he claims to have received; and in any event, even if a book of this nature was used, it could only have served as a *basis* for Geoffrey's History, since the latter contains material which must have come from other sources. Part of it was already given in Nennius' Chronicle. An abstract of those parts of Geoffrey's History which refer to Arthur or which relate events connected with him is given below so that the reader may form an idea of the earliest presentation of the Arthurian story.

In the reign of Vortigern occurred the Saxon invasion under Hengist and Horsa, who were at first friendly, but later rose against the British. Vortigern started to build a tower of refuge, but the foundations disappeared as soon as they were laid, and the wizards told him he could only prevent this by sprinkling over the stones the blood of a lad who never had a father. At Caermarthen they found a boy named Merlin (*i.e.* *Merlinus*, or

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Ambrosius Merlinus) whose father was unknown. The mother said the boy's father was a supernatural being. Merlin showed such miraculous powers in indicating where they would find a subterranean pool which interfered with the building operations and also in describing two dragons which would be found in the pool, that they were all filled with wonder. The boy's supernatural powers were also shown by a long prophecy¹ which he uttered about the coming history of Britain. In fulfilment of this prophecy Aurelius Ambrosius, as the rightful heir to the British throne, came back from Brittany, conquered first Vortigern and then the Saxons; and, by availing himself of Merlin's magic powers, built a memorial for the brave British princes who had fallen in defense of their country. For this purpose and by Merlin's help he brought enormous stones from Ireland, and set them up around the burial-place (Stonehenge).

Uther Pendragon, Aurelius' brother, was the next King. He had a quarrel with Gorlois, Duke of Cornwall, and he loved the latter's wife, Igerne. Through Merlin's enchantment Uther was changed into the semblance of Gorlois, and visited the

¹ The prophecies of Merlin were a previous work inserted here as a part of the History.

castle of Tintagel where Igerne was hidden. Meanwhile the King's followers had vanquished and slain Gorlois. Uther was changed back to his rightful personality by Merlin's enchantments, returned to Tintagel, captured Igerne, and married her. Their children were Arthur and Anna.

On the death of Uther, Arthur became King at fifteen years of age. He fought against the Saxons,—arming himself with the shield called *Priwen* (or Pridwen), the sword called *Caliburn* (forged at Avalon)¹, and the lance called *Ron*. The slaughter of the Saxons was great. Arthur then attacked and vanquished the Scots and Picts, and placed his brother-in-law Lot over the Dukedom of Lothian and other provinces. The sons of Lot and Anna were Gawain and Mordred. Finally when the kingdom was at peace, Arthur married Guanhuma (Guinevere), a beautiful maiden of a noble Roman family who had been brought up in the household of the Duke of Cador.

Arthur's war campaigns were then extended to include Ireland, Iceland, Norway, Denmark, and Gaul. Then, after these many conquests he arranged a great gathering at the City of

¹ Avalon represents the Celtic other world; thus Arthur's sword has supernatural power.

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Legions (Caerleon) of the vassal kings, dukes and earls from all parts of Great Britain and from the foreign countries now under his rule, in order to have a suitable coronation. As the great festivities were in progress, messengers from Rome appeared, and claimed tribute; but Arthur refused, and gave notice that he would himself claim tribute from Rome. The Roman Emperor in due season mustered the "Kings of the Orient" to aid him, including the rulers of the Greeks, Africans, Spaniards, Egyptians, Babylonians, etc. They all started for Britain; and Arthur placed his nephew Mordred and his own queen Guanhumara in charge, and embarked for Barfleur with his army to meet them.

While awaiting the arrival of the enemies, Arthur heard that a marvelous giant from Spain had captured Helena, niece of Duke Hoel of Armorica, and had imprisoned her at "the mount that is named after Michael," viz, Mont St. Michel; so he sought out the giant and slew him there."

The armies met in Gaul, and the Romans were defeated with great slaughter. In due season Arthur started for Rome; but while on the way he heard that Mordred was a traitor and was claiming the kingdom and intending to marry Guanhumara. Arthur hastened back to Britain, and

the battle was fought immediately on his arrival there. Walgan (Gawain), Arthur's nephew, was slain. The queen fled to Caerleon and entered a nunnery. Arthur pursued Mordred and fought a tremendous battle on the banks of the river Camel, which resulted in the death of Mordred. Arthur was mortally wounded and was borne to the island of Avalon to be healed; and there he resigned his crown to Constantine, *son of Cador, Duke of Cornwall*, in A.D. 542.

Geoffrey's "history" did not escape contemporary criticism on the ground that it represented a work of imagination rather than a record of facts; and this same skepticism still prevails. However, even allowing that the proportion of truth to fiction is small, it must not be inferred that the fiction is entirely original with Geoffrey. Much evidence has been discovered showing that he made considerable use of current popular traditions. It is probable that long before the time when Geoffrey wrote there were already legendary features attached to the popular conception of Arthur.

Other evidence exists in writings previous to Geoffrey's time, contemporary with him, and following shortly after him, to show that Arthur was independently known as a heroic character,

and that traditions clustered about his name. Thus it is evident that in Geoffrey's expansion of history into romance he made considerable use of myths and popular tales, not only in the construction of the story, but also to portray his conception of Arthur. Merlin, for instance, was certainly a character already known to Celtic tradition.

The next important step in the development of the Arthurian story is found in the *Brut*¹ of Wace, a Norman poet contemporary with Geoffrey. He wrote what is practically a paraphrase in French of Geoffrey's History containing about 15,000 lines, in which he expanded the original material, increased the romantic element, and infused into the story a spirit of chivalry which was a natural result of the country from which he came and the people for whom he wrote. The book was written about the middle of the twelfth century. The minor differences between his story and that of Geoffrey do not call for reference here. It may be mentioned, however, in passing, that Arthur's queen is here called Genievre. The one point which claims special attention is that in Wace's *Brut* we find the first mention of King Arthur's Round Table. The allusion is brief. It is merely

¹ So-called after Brute or Brutus, King of the Britons.

stated that Arthur made a round table at which, in view of its shape none of his "barons" could claim that he had a higher seat than any of the others. The size of the table is not mentioned. It is further stated that the "Bretons" told many stories about the table, and this seems to indicate that there was traditional material, known to the writer and familiar to his readers, which alluded to it. The probability of the existence of such material is increased by the fact that Wace evidently knew stories about Arthur and Gawain, the existence of which is not indicated by Geoffrey. It does not necessarily follow that the current traditions about the Round Table connected it with King Arthur. Quarrels about precedence at feasts are a well-known feature of Celtic traditional stories,¹ so the allusion by Wace may be only an echo of these traditions which was worked into the *Brut* by its author, and connected there for the first time with King Arthur's career. It cannot be stated definitely whether the "Bretons" who knew the many stories about the Round Table were of the division of that race which dwelt in Amorica (Brittany), or whether the Welsh were meant. However, it is to be noted that Wace,

¹ *The Round Table before Wace*, by A. C. L. Brown in Harvard Studies in Philology and Literature, vol. vii.

after telling of Arthur's going to Avalon, also states that the "Bretons" looked for his return to rule again, which seems to refer to the inhabitants of Arthur's own kingdom, and, consequently, to connect the reference with the original Celtic traditions.

About fifty years after the appearance of Wace's *Brut*, or say in the earliest years of the thirteenth century, there was finished another work of a similar character, the *Brut* of Layamon. The author was a Saxon priest living on the banks of the Severn in Worcestershire. Speaking in a general way, the work was a poetic retelling of Wace's story, lengthened to more than 30,000 lines with further amplification of details, and addition of material not found in Wace—partly of Welsh origin and partly Breton or Norman.

For the purpose of our present investigations it is only necessary to refer to the main points in which Layamon's *Brut* makes any material addition to, or modification of, the Arthurian story. The first of these is seen in the reference to Arthur's birth, where it is stated that the elves took him and enchanted him, thus giving an early indication of the tendency to emphasize the miraculous conception of the hero.

Again, the institution of the Round Table is

told differently. A carpenter in Cornwall told Arthur that he was aware of the strife in which the knights had been engaged, and that he would make for the King a table at which more than 1,600 might sit; and it would nevertheless be possible for Arthur to carry it about with him, and thus there need be no strife for precedence. The table was built in four weeks time. It is added here also that this was the table of which the Britons told many tales.

The third important addition is in respect to the incidents of Arthur's death. Layamon states that Arthur, having given his kingdom to Constantine, said he would go to Avalon to Argante the queen of the elves to be healed, and afterwards he would return to his kingdom. There then appeared a little boat containing two beautiful women, who took Arthur away; and the Britons believe that he still lives in Avalon with Argante, and they await his return, but no one knows anything more about Arthur.

In this work the name of Arthur's queen undergoes a further modification, being given as "Wenhaver" or "Gwenayfer" in different manuscripts. The knight we know as Gawain is here called "Walwain," and he is spoken of as the truest knight (or man) on earth.

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These modifications of the earlier form of the narrative, whether original with Layamon, or taken from some revision of Wace's work, serve to illustrate the accretion of traditional material in the development of the popular conception of King Arthur.

Layamon's *Brut* is of especial interest from a linguistic point of view. Geoffrey's History, as we have seen above, was written in Latin; Wace's *Brut* was written in French; Layamon's *Brut* is an English production, belonging to what has been called the Semi-Saxon period. Since the Norman conquest the native tongue had been replaced by French in the court and official life; but now, after more than a century had passed, the language of the common people was reasserting itself, and Layamon's work, aside from the poetic genius of the author, commands special attention from its important position in the history and development of English literature.

The conception of Arthur's character shows a different standpoint from that of Wace. While there are supernatural features woven into the story—particularly in the references to Merlin and to the birth of Arthur—nevertheless the general tone of the work reflects the author's sober and practical Saxon character. Arthur

is here much less of a romantic Knight and much more of a warring and victorious King.

In view of the foregoing references to the earliest mention of King Arthur's Round Table it may be of interest to allude to the traditional Round Table itself which is affixed to the wall in the Great Hall of Winchester Castle. It is an enormous table-top eighteen feet in diameter divided into twenty-five concentric sections, one for the King and one for each of the Knights (twenty-four in number) and bearing their names. The present coloring of the sections, alternately green and white, was by order of King Henry VIII. There seems to be no doubt of the antiquity of this relic. *John Hardyng's Chronicle* written early in the 15th century says that the Round Table made by Joseph of Arimathea for the brethren of the Grail, was placed at Winchester by Uter to comfort Ygerne, and that it hangs there "yet," thus implying a considerable antiquity.

References have been made above to traditions about Arthur which were known to the various writers, and used by them in their works which have been mentioned. Some evidence of these is found in the early literature of Wales. In the library of

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Jesus College, Oxford, there is an ancient Welsh manuscript called the *Red Book of Hergest*—probably of the fourteenth century—containing a collection of tales in poetry and in prose. Some of these are romances of the age of chivalry, while others belong evidently to a considerably earlier time. In fact some of the tales exist in other manuscripts which are known to be fifty to one hundred years earlier than the Red Book; and the tales themselves point to a still greater age. Some of these tales are known as *Mabinogion*—a title which apparently indicates stories taught by a Bard to a Mabinog, *i.e.* one who was learning that profession. Two stories in the Red Book are of special interest, *Kilhwch* (or *Kulhwch*) and *Olwen* and *The Dream of Rhonabwy*, since King Arthur appears in them, ruling in dignity, and surrounded by men of mark; and they have not any counterpart in any other literature. Kai, Gwalchmai, Bedwyr and others, known in the Arthurian romance, are here; and Arthur's queen is Gwenhwyvar. Gwalchmai is the Welsh equivalent of Gawain, and it should be observed that he is also here called “the best of knights.” These are not historical tales; their spirit is of legend or romance, and they contain a strong element of the supernatural. Moreover, they give evidence of long-

established traditions about Arthur which reach back to an undetermined antiquity when he was known as a mythic hero, antedating the later conception of him as a knight of the age of chivalry.

Besides the *Red Book of Hergest* there are three notable Welsh manuscripts called the *Black Book of Caermarthen* (written in the second half of the twelfth century) the *Book of Aneurin* (latter part of thirteenth century) and the *Book of Taliessin* (beginning of fourteenth century), which, together with the *Red Book of Hergest*, have been called collectively "The Four Ancient Books of Wales." The contents of these books include various poems by four bards, Aneurin, Taliessin, Llywarch Hen, and Myrddin, who are held by high authority to have been real persons living in the sixth century; but the poems in their existing shape are probably not exactly as written by their authors in that early age. It is interesting to note that two of these ancient poems in the *Black Book of Caermarthen* and two in the *Book of Taliessen*, mention Arthur by name—alluding to him as a great warrior. This gives additional weight to the belief that literature about Arthur was available to the writers from whom we get our earliest information concerning him; while on the other

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hand the paucity of these references seems to imply that the poems mentioned antedate the period when the mythical and romantic stories were produced.

The personality of Merlin, and the traditions relating to him, require brief reference here. In the abstract of a part of Geoffrey's History, given above, Merlin's birth and his early-developed supernatural powers are mentioned with considerable detail; but this is not the earliest mention of the story. Practically the same tale about the tower is found in the Chronicle of Nennius, dating more than three centuries earlier, but with some modifications. Vortigern's name is here Guorthigirnus, and the wonderful boy is called Ambrosius. In re-writing this story Geoffrey did not originate the name and character of Merlin; he made use of traditions long current, which are clearly indicated but difficult to state with precision and in detail. It is evident that Merlin had a place in Celtic traditions long before Geoffrey, and that there were at least prophetic powers, if not supernatural, which were attributed to him at an early date.

In the Arthurian stories thus far considered which all belong to the literature of Great Britain,

Merlin was a character of less importance than in some of the French romances which we shall now consider. Moreover, the reader will note that in the early British literature, which we have discussed in the present chapter, there is no allusion to the legend of the Grail, except the incidental reference in Hardyng's Chronicle.

NOTE: The general subject covered by this chapter is treated with great detail in *The Arthurian Material in the Chronicles* by Robert Huntington Fletcher. Harvard Studies in Philology and Literature, vol. x., 1906. This has been very helpful to the present writer in preparing the foregoing references to the early Chronicles.

CHAPTER III

CHRÉTIEN'S PERCEVAL

BEGINNING with the latter part of the twelfth century and extending into the early part of the thirteenth, there occurred—mainly on the Continent—a remarkable outburst of literary activity about the legends of King Arthur and the Holy Grail. Its sudden beginning and its almost equally sudden ending, and the comparative shortness of its duration, combined to make it a very remarkable occurrence. The first writer in this period who claims our attention is Chrétien de Troyes, who lived during the latter half of the twelfth century. His death occurred about the year 1191. He occupies a very prominent position in mediæval French literature. Several of his poems are known in addition to the one we are about to consider, viz.: *Érec et Énide*, *Cligés*, *Le Chevalier de la Charrette* (or *Lancelot*), and *Le Chevalier au Lion* (or *Yvain*). A later work was *Perceval le Gallois* or *Le Conte del Graal* which is of special interest because it contains the earliest known reference to the Holy Grail. The author

wrote about 9,000 lines, and then the poem came to a sudden stop, leaving the narrative unfinished and the concluding sentence broken. There is no indication of the reason for this incomplete ending; it has been attributed to the author's death. The poem was continued by other writers at different times during succeeding years, possibly as late as about 1240, until it reached a total length of about 60,000 lines. The various continuations are of interest in showing the development of the theme at different dates during the period of special literary activity referred to above, but the poem as thus completed is full of inconsistencies and cannot by any means be regarded as a homogeneous work. In the present chapter we shall mainly limit ourselves to that part which Chrétien himself wrote.

There are extant a number of manuscripts of this work in various libraries in Great Britain and on the Continent, but the only approximation to a printed presentation of the poem is in Potvin's edition of the manuscript in the library at Mons, Belgium,¹ in which a considerable part of the text is printed in full, and an abstract given of the

¹ *Perceval le Gallois (Le Conte del Graal)* Potvin, Mons, 1866-1871. I am informed there is an undated printed edition of the poem by G. Baist in the Bibliothèque Nationale at Paris.

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balance. A full understanding of the poem and the problem it presents could only be had by a critical study and comparison of the various manuscripts; our present consideration is limited to the narrative.

In nearly all the manuscripts there is a short prologue of 68 lines, believed to be from the hand of Chrétien himself. It does not contain any material relating to the subject of the poem which follows. The prologue is mainly composed of general observations, but the last seven lines are of importance, since they state that the writing of the poem was a result of orders given by "The Count"¹ to Chrétien to the effect that he should put into rhyme the story of the Grail, and that "the book" containing the story was lent to Chrétien for that purpose.

The abstract which follows is not intended to give a complete and comprehensive account of the entire story, but rather to cover only such parts thereof as are necessary to follow the thread of the narrative and especially its essential points with respect to the Grail and the Arthurian Legends.²

¹ This was Count Philip of Flanders, who died 1191.

² More detailed summaries may be found in Alfred Nutt's *Studies on the Legend of the Holy Grail*, and Miss Weston's *Legend of Sir Perceval*, vol. i, to both of which the present writer is indebted.

The reader should bear in mind that, as stated above, this romance contains the earliest known reference to the Holy Grail.

PERCEVAL LE GALLOIS (Le Conte del Graal).

The widow's son one day met five knights in the forest and took them for angels. Conversing with them about their armor he learned that they were knights from King Arthur. Returning to his mother he expressed a wish to be a knight, and she reluctantly consented, after telling him that his father and his two elder brothers had lost their lives through the dangers attendant on knighthood. She instructed him to honor women and said he might kiss them if they were willing: he might also accept presents from them; he should frequent churches and monasteries; and she was obliged to explain to him what these places were. Dressed "a la guise des Galois,"¹ he set forth. Passing a tent in which a lady was sleeping, he kissed her and carried off her ring. Before arriving at Carduel where Arthur held court, the youth met a knight in red armor who spoke insultingly of the king. He went to the king's banquet hall and asked to be made a knight.

¹ The reference to the costume of a Welshman, taken in connection with other texts, seems to imply simplicity,—even rusticity.

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A maiden, who had not laughed for ten years, laughed at the lad and was slapped on the cheek by one of the knights, named Kay. It had been prophesied that she would not laugh until she should see the best of the knights. Afterwards the lad went out, vanquished the Red Knight, and took his armor.

Perceval visited a castle, Biau Repaire, where the maiden Blancheflor was besieged by King Clamadeus. The King was defeated by the youth and sent as prisoner to King Arthur. The young victor promised to return and marry Blancheflor after he had succeeded in the search he was making for his mother.

Following the directions of one of two men fishing in a boat, he arrived after some difficulty and delay at the fisher's castle, where his host, who was an old man, received him while lying on a couch in a great hall filled with knights. He was presented with a sword which was sent by his host's niece, and which would not break except in one peril known only to its maker; and there had been only two others forged besides this one. A procession of retainers passed through the hall—a youth with a bleeding lance, two more with lighted candles, a lovely maid bearing a "graal" of gold and precious stones shining brilliantly,

and then another with a "taule" or "*tailleoir d'argent*" (silver dish or plate). A meal was served, and the "Graal" passed by after each course. The young knight, desirous of avoiding unnecessary talking, omitted any questions about these mysteries. In the morning he found the castle deserted and as he left it the drawbridge closed suddenly. Meeting a maiden in the forest he was informed that he had visited the Rich Fisher King, who had been wounded in the thigh by a spear, and that he should have inquired about the mysteries. She asked his name, and although he appeared not to have known it before, he said it was Perceval le Gallois, but she said he should be called Perceval le Caitif and informed him she was his cousin. She explained that the King would have been healed if he had asked an explanation of the mysteries he saw. She further spoke of his sword, and said that if it should break he should take it to Trebucet, who forged it, and could mend it.

King Arthur with his knights went in search of Perceval, who was finally discovered in a sort of trance—gazing on some drops of blood from a wounded bird which had fallen on the snow, and which, with the white snow itself, reminded him of the similar colors in the face of his lady-love,

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Blancheflor. They all went to Arthur's court at Carlion, where a hideous damsels appeared, riding a mule. She repeated the statement already made to Perceval about his omission to ask an explanation of the Grail, blaming him again severely for it and its consequences. Perceval swore that he would not remain two nights in the same place until he had learned an explanation of the Grail mysteries.

Then follows a section which relates a number of Gawain's adventures, including a fight in which he defended himself with a large chessboard, while his lady companion hurled the large chessman at their assailants. Gawain was apparently at this time on a journey to find the Bleeding Lance.

The story now relates how Perceval, after wandering for five years, and having forgotten about God and the obligation to worship Him, met some knights and ladies on Good Friday morning, and when rebuked for going armed on that day, he explained that he had lost track of time. He was directed to a hermit living in the vicinity, made confession, and remained there over Easter. He ascertained that the hermit was his mother's brother; that the Rich Fisher was also an uncle; that the father of these uncles was still living; and that he was the king whose life was

sustained by the "oiste" (Host, wafer) which the "Graal" contained; and he led such a spiritual life that he needed no other nourishment. The hermit also told Perceval that his mother's death had been caused by grief for him, and that for this reason he had failed to ask about the Lance and the Grail.

Again the story changes to Gawain, whose continued adventures are related. The principal one was a visit to an enchanted castle filled with women. Here he had a hard time while sitting on a bed called "Le Lit de la Merveille," but he finally overcame the enchantments. The queen who ruled the castle was found to be the mother of King Arthur, Ugierne, who had come here after the death of her husband, Pandragon. A messenger was sent to Arthur's court where all were mourning at the lack of news about Gawain.

The narrative stops here with a broken sentence. Its abrupt beginning raises our curiosity; and its incomplete ending leaves us puzzled and unsatisfied. We also note the presence of considerable material which has no direct bearing on the main subject of the poem.

Besides the brief prologue by Chrétien which is mentioned on a previous page, there are in the Mons manuscript two other prologues which are

from the hands of other writers. The first of these will be discussed later in this chapter. The second prologue, which occupies lines 485 to 1282 of the Mons manuscript (and is found in only one other manuscript), is called the *Bliocadrans* prologue because that name is borne by the last survivor of twelve warlike brothers who are therein mentioned. Bliocadrans was killed in a tournament while supporting the King of Gales against the King of the Gaste Fontaine. During his absence his wife gave birth to a son. The mother sought a home in the Gaste Forest where her son could never see any knights, and they finally settled, with their retinue, in a secluded spot where the boy was reared in the belief that there existed no other houses or people. The mother cautioned her son if he should meet beings covered with iron he would know them to be devils, and he must protect himself by saying his Credo, and return immediately home.

This prologue supplies the necessary introduction to render intelligible the beginning of Chrétien's poem; and it is of special interest because it seems to be a variant of a widely spread folk-tale existing in various forms long before Chrétien, and well-known in his time. When or how this prologue became attached to Chrétien's

poem is not known; the theory has been advanced (but without proof) that it is a part of the material which served as the source of the poem and therefore a document of the highest importance.¹

This prologue would of itself illustrate the undoubtedly use by Chrétien of previously existing literary material in writing his poem; but the curious reference to "the widow's son" in the abrupt commencement of the poem may have a further significance. It has been regarded on the one hand as supporting a theory (discussed in a later chapter) whereby the origin of the Grail ceremonies is found in certain mystic rites, traceable to ancient times—the Initiate being called by this appellation. Another view of this strange phrase is that Chrétien's narrative shows the influence of the idea of matriarchal descent, quite prevalent at that time; and that an indication is thus given with respect to the origin of the Grail story. These brief allusions to theories concerning an apparently unimportant feature of the narrative are introduced here merely for the purpose of illustrating how at the very outset of our investigations we find ourselves on the edge of discussions of considerable importance from a critical standpoint.

¹ *Legend of Sir Perceval*, vol. i, p. 73.

There are various features of the narrative which should be carefully noted, even though we make no effort at this point to discuss them in detail. The central point of interest is, of course, the mention of the Grail, which appears to be a dish of wonderful workmanship, shedding a brilliant light, used in conjunction with certain ceremonies, and connected in some mysterious way with the life and health of the wounded king in whose castle it was lodged. It is referred to as being "Holy," and its beneficial influence in sustaining the king's life is of a spiritual nature by reason of the Host or wafer which it contains. This is practically all that Chrétien himself says about the Grail. Obviously the idea was not a creation of his fancy; it must have been taken from the book which he had before him; but the poem does not itself afford any explanation of the real significance of the Grail and its attendant ceremonies.

Another curious feature of the story is the introduction of certain adventures of Gawain, many of which are apparently quite independent of the Perceval story, and break the flow of the narrative. Gawain appears to be under some obligation to find the Lance which was at the Grail castle, but no explanation is given either of the

nature of this obligation or of the significance of the Lance. Gawain's adventures are further related in detail by one of Chrétien's continuators, who wrote some time later, and it is shown that he reached the Grail castle and found the Lance. There appears to be here a trace of independent traditions which became in some measure engrafted upon the adventures of Perceval.

Again, the references to the King of the Grail Castle require attention. He is first shown in the act of fishing in a boat near the castle, but later he is revealed in the hall of the castle lying on a couch in state, and surrounded by many knights. He is called the Rich Fisher King or the Rich Fisher. He has been wounded, and his restoration to health is dependent on the asking of a certain question by a visitor to the castle.

It is desirable to make some allusion to the first of the two prologues (mentioned on a previous page) which are found in the Mons manuscript. It is called the *Elucidation*; it occupies the first 484 lines of that manuscript, and it is found in no other.

It relates how certain maidens suffered at the hands of King Amangons and his knights, and how the Knights of the Round Table, who desired to avenge the wrong done to the maidens, found

female descendants of these maidens in the company of certain knights, and attacked the latter. One of them, Blihos-Bliheris, by name, was conquered by Gawain and sent to Arthur's court. The land of the maidens, the kingdom of Logres (England) was dead, like a desert, and could not be restored to fertility until the last court of the Rich Fisher, under the influence of which there had been great prosperity, had been found again. Gawain found it, but Perceval le Gallois had done so first. The text then makes allusions to the Grail castle and its wonders—always apparently as if to a well known tale. Among the points of interest may be mentioned that the Grail moved into and out of the room “without sergeant or seneschal” and served all with food; that the Rich Fisher had magic powers, and could change his appearance at will; and that after the court had been found the land became fertile again.

To mention this prologue at this stage of our studies seems out of place, since it is of considerably later authorship, and it introduces certain features of the Grail story which belong to a later stage of development and would only cause confusion if discussed here.

The special point of interest in this Elucidation prologue is the indication it gives with reference to

the possibility of an already existing Grail story. Its opening lines allude to a "Master Bleheris" who had already written about this subject and had alluded to the mysteries connected with the Grail. One of the continuators of Chrétien's poem, *i.e.*, Wauchier, also refers (in some of the manuscripts) to Bleheris as an authority, evidently indicating the same writer. He states that Bleheris was a Welshman, and that he told his tale to a Count of Poitiers. Giraldus Cambrensis, of the latter part of the twelfth century, mentions a writer whom he calls Bledhericus, a man of literary prominence, believed to be the same writer as was mentioned by Thomas of Brittany as the source of his poem about Tristan (written in England about 1170). The indications are that these references are to an identical person who may possibly be regarded as an early authority on the Arthurian and Grail legends.

Some degree of skepticism is justified in regard to the genuineness of references by mediæval writers to the sources from which they claimed to draw, and we must acknowledge that we are to a large extent dealing with conjectures. Nevertheless, we must not dismiss as unworthy of credence these references to the works of an early writer whose identity is shrouded in mystery, but who

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may have been the source of important material relating to King Arthur and the Holy Grail. We may have here an indication of the vanished literature whose absence deprives us of that which is sorely needed for the comprehensive study of these legends.

NOTE: For a discussion of the identification of this writer, and of the possibility that he actually wrote about the Grail, see various references in Miss Weston's *Legend of Sir Perceval*, vols. i and ii. See also an article by W. J. Gruffydd in *Revue Celtique*, vol. xxxiii, and notes by Edward Owen and Miss Weston in vol. xxxii of the same publication.

CHAPTER IV

ROBERT DE BORRON

WE will consider in the next place Robert de Borron, another French writer, whose importance in connection with the Grail literature is beyond question, but about whom there is still considerable uncertainty. This uncertainty concerns not only his exact chronological position in respect to other writers on these subjects, but also the writings which are attributed to him. The time when he wrote would appear to have been about the end of the twelfth century or about the beginning of the thirteenth.

It has been generally believed that Robert de Borron composed a trilogy, of which the first two parts are known, while the third, although plainly indicated, cannot be positively identified. The first two of these parts bear the titles *Joseph* (of Arimathea) and *Merlin*. The former deals with the Grail, the latter with King Arthur. A poetic form of the *Joseph* has been preserved in full; but the poetic form of the *Merlin* only exists

to the extent of 504 lines.¹ Prose forms of the complete works are found in a number of manuscripts; but while these have been considered by some writers as the original forms in which the works appeared, they are now generally regarded as embodying only revisions of the original poems, and considerably later in date. In the case of the Merlin the small part of the poem which has been preserved agrees closely with the prose rendering, so it is a fair inference that the remainder of the latter is in close correspondence with the missing part of the original poem. However, it is not probable that in either case we have the original work in the exact form in which the author left it.

In preparing the abstracts which follow, the purpose has been to eliminate as much as possible of the wearisome detail, as well as those incidents which are not directly closely connected with the subject of the present studies. No doubt some incidents are omitted which would require careful study in a critical examination of the writings; but the effort has been made to give merely the main points of the narratives—the object being to bring into compact form the material which bears directly on King Arthur and the Holy Grail. It

¹ The Joseph and the part of Merlin are included in *Le Roman du Saint Graal*, Francisque Michel, Bordeaux, 1841.

should, however, be remembered that there are discrepancies in the details of the narrative as found in different manuscripts, so it is impossible to refer to any one version as the original form.

JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA¹

Joseph of Arimathea was a soldier under Pilate. He loved Jesus secretly. After the betrayal by Judas, one of the Jews carried away the vessel used by Jesus at the Last Supper, and gave it to Pilate who in turn gave it to Joseph. Nicodemus and Joseph took the body from the cross, and the latter used the vessel to receive the blood which flowed from the Saviour's body. After the resurrection the Jews put Joseph into prison. Jesus appeared to him, carrying the sacred vessel, which He gave to Joseph, telling him that he would be the first of three persons who would have charge of it. He also explained to Joseph the symbolic connection between the sacred vessel and the celebration of the Mass, and taught him the secret words which no one can use unless he has read the great book in which they are recorded—the secret of the great sacrament made with the Grail, or chalice.

¹ Also called *Petit Saint Graal*. Condensed from Hucher's *Saint Graal*, Mans, 1874, which is based on MS. Cangé 4, Bib. Nat. No. 748, formerly 71703.

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A long time after these events Vespasian, the son of the Roman Emperor Titus, was cured of leprosy by the veil (sydoine) of Veronica on which was imprinted the image of our Lord's face; and Vespasian undertook the work of punishing the Jews who put such a man to death. In Judea Vespasian heard of Joseph, found him in prison, where he had been sustained by the sacred vessel for forty-two years, had a long interview with him, and was converted to Christianity.

Joseph's sister, Enysgeus, and her husband Brons welcomed Joseph's delivery from prison, and were converted, as also many others. Joseph with his friends quitted Judea, taking the vessel with them, and went to live in distant lands. After a while their prosperity waned and the people made known their troubles to Joseph, through Brons. Joseph knelt before the sacred vessel and prayed for guidance, and learned that God was offended at the sins of his companions. The Holy Spirit instructed him to make a square table as a symbol of the one at which Jesus sat, and to place on it the sacred vessel opposite the seat which he would occupy. He was also to instruct Brons to catch a fish which was to be placed near the sacred vessel. Brons was to sit at Joseph's right hand, but with one empty seat between them to signify

the seat of Judas. This seat was only to be occupied when a son (or grandson—the manuscripts vary) of Brons and Enysgeus should be born, and he would use it.

Joseph did as he was commanded. Those who sat at the table felt the blessed influence of the sacred vessel; but the rest of the people were ashamed and went away, for they had been sinful. Joseph told them all to come back to the table every day, and thus prove the virtue to be thereby obtained. Inquiry being made in regard to the name of the vessel, it was said to be the *Grail* because it was agreeable and pleasing to those who were in its company. Thus the tale is called the Story of the Grail.

One day Moys feigned the proper condition of mind and heart to permit of his sitting at the table. He took the empty seat next to Joseph and the earth opened beneath him, and he disappeared.

Joseph again knelt before the Grail, and the Holy Spirit reminded him of what had previously been revealed, and said that the son of Brons and Enysgeus would himself have a son who would occupy another vacant seat at another table which would be made as a souvenir of this one.

After remaining a long time in this region, Joseph went to preach in Great Britain. While

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he was there Brons and Enysgeus had twelve sons born to them. All married save one, Alain le Gros, whom Joseph received with joy to consecrate him to the service of the Lord. The Holy Spirit told Joseph to give full instructions to Alain and to tell him he would have a son who would inherit the sacred vessel. Alain was to go into distant western countries. Peter was to go to the vale of Avaron and there await the son of Alain.

It was revealed to Joseph that Brons was to have charge of the holy vessel after him, and that Brons was to be instructed in the secret words which the Lord spoke to Joseph in the prison. Brons was to be called the Rich Fisher on account of the fish he had caught for the service of the table. As soon as Brons received the Grail he was to go westward with the rest of the people, and there await his grandson and give him the sacred vessel. Thus would be fulfilled the figure of the Trinity in the three possessors of the Grail. When Joseph had delivered to Brons the sacred vessel he would go to eternal joy. The delivery of the vessel was made, and then they separated. The Rich Fisher went to Great Britain; but the final statement about Joseph's death or departure to another country is not clear.

Before continuing this history Robert de Borron

said he must first tell the history of a lineage or race of "Bretaigne."

The scriptural part of this story is not an original conception of its author. He appears to have used an ancient tale, well known at that period, called the Gospel of Nicodemus. Three poetical versions of this exist,¹ dating from about the same period as Robert de Borron, but the original writing was of a much older date. It seems to have been a combination of two early Christian writings treating of the Passion of Christ and His descent into the lower world. The date when this combination was made cannot be determined accurately, but the two writings of which it was composed are assigned by different authorities to various periods between the second and the fourth centuries. The material contained therein appears to have been intended to supplement the Evangelical Gospels; and among the incidents related are the imprisonment of Joseph on the charge of concealing the body of Jesus, and his miraculous delivery by the Saviour's help.

From this basis Borron's story was developed. In it the sacred dish is seen to have a spiritual

¹ They may be found in *Trois versions Rimées de l'Évangile de Nicodème*, Société des Anciens Textes Français, 1885.

influence capable of bringing blessings; it serves in some manner to mark a difference between those who were sinful and those who were living aright; and it seems also to have been efficacious in obtaining counsel from the Holy Spirit when Joseph sought such guidance. The care of the vessel at Joseph's death was to devolve on his brother-in-law Brons; and on the latter's death the sacred duty would pass to his grandson, yet unborn. This provision for three Grail-keepers is, according to the text, symbolic of the Holy Trinity.

The explanation given with respect to the name of the vessel is very puzzling; it is virtually a pun on the verb *agréer*, to please, to be acceptable or agreeable.

The reference to a table and to an empty seat thereat, are interesting features. The table is to be square, and is to be considered as a memorial of the one which was used at the Last Supper. A prophetical reference is made to another table to be constructed later, which is mentioned in the next poem; and this latter table is mentioned in a later romance as having served as a basis for the institution of the Round Table by King Arthur. The three tables were also considered as symbolizing the Holy Trinity. The empty seat, dangerous

to any occupant until used by a man yet unborn, is a feature whose significance and origin are puzzling; but it may have been borrowed from some current tradition and developed through these romances into an interesting feature of the story of the Grail.¹

The fish which was caught by Brons and placed on the table is undoubtedly a symbol of Christ, in accordance with the early Christian traditions. It does not seem here to play any active part in the narrative, but is apparently considered as connected with the Grail itself in the separation of the wicked from the good.

In Chrétien's *Perceval* we saw that the guardian of the Grail Castle was called the Rich Fisher King, or the Rich Fisher; but there was no apparent explanation of the fishing title except that the King was fishing when Perceval saw him. In the *Joseph*, the title of Fisher King is given to Brons because he caught the fish which became an important feature in the gathering at the table. Those two titles, apparently used interchangeably,

¹ Cf. Miss Weston's *Legend of Sir Perceval*, vol. ii, Chapter III. The occupation of the Perilous Seat in other romances (*i.e.* the *Queste*, Chapter VI. The *Didot-Perceval*, Chapter IX, and Gerbert's continuation of Chrétien, Chapter V) seems to be a test, the fulfilment of which was a necessary step for the hero who would find the Grail.

are applied to a character of great importance in the Grail story, as we shall see later on.

It is sufficient for our present purpose to give the foregoing brief notice of certain features of the romance, without fuller discussion thereof. The reader should note particularly this earliest identification of the Holy Grail with the Cup of the Last Supper, and the general spirit of Christian symbolism which pervades the work, the latter being shown much more clearly in the text than in our condensed abstract. Further, this romance gives the first indication of the transportation of the Grail to Great Britain, and embodies a legendary account of the conversion of that country.

The second part of the trilogy tells of the birth and exploits of Merlin, and the early life of Arthur up to the time of his coronation. An abstract follows.

MERLIN

The devils plotted to gain power over men through a man who would be subservient to them and do their will. From one of them and a woman a child was born, and was named Merlin

¹ Condensed from the Huth MS—fo. 19b-75a, as printed with Notes and Introduction, by Gaston Paris and Jacob Ulrich, Société des Anciens Textes Français, Paris, 1886.

after his grandfather. While still a child he showed supernatural powers. These gifts attracted the attention of a wise man named Blaise, the confessor of Merlin's mother, who undertook to write a book containing the revelations made by Merlin about the history of Joseph of Arimathea, and about the holy vessel, and his own miraculous birth. Merlin then announced to Blaise his departure for the Occident, and he told Blaise to go to the regions where those people resided who guarded the Holy Grail. He was to ask for a land called Northumberland.

At that time Constant was King of England. He had three sons: Moine, Pendragon, and Uter. At Constant's death, Moine became King. He was vanquished by the Saxons, and afterwards slain by his own barons, who persuaded the late King's seneschal, Vertigier, to rule over them. Pendragon and Uter, being young, were sent by their guardians into another country; meanwhile, Vertigier's enemies became active, so he made alliance with the Saxons and married the daughter of Hangus, one of their chiefs.

Vertigier started to build an impregnable tower, but three times the walls fell down, and the wise men told him he must mix the mortar with the blood of a child who never had a father.

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Seeing a number of children playing, and hearing one of them, who was Merlin, accused of having had no father, the wise men took Merlin to the King, after Merlin had bidden farewell to his mother and to Blaise and had predicted to the latter the glories of King Arthur, who was to come. On the way Merlin gave proof of his supernatural powers, and in due season he explained to the King that the difficulty about building the tower arose from water under the tower in which were two dragons; and all this proved to be true, and the tower was then built.

Soon afterwards Pendragon and Uter returned to England and vanquished Vertigier at Winchester. Pendragon became King and sought the aid of Merlin against the Saxons. After giving several proofs of his miraculous powers, Merlin consented to join the retinue of the King. Pendragon having been slain in battle with the Saxons Uter became King, and took the name of Uter Pendragon. By Merlin's magical powers great stones were brought from Ireland, and set up near Salisbury as a memorial to Pendragon.

Merlin became attached to Uter and served him a long time, and finally revealed to Uter the history of the tables of Jesus and Joseph of Arimathea, and urged him to build another in the

name of the Trinity. By Uter's authority Merlin had the table built at Carduel in Wales; and when there was an assemblage of the people at Pentecost, Merlin chose fifty knights to sit at the table. There was one seat which would remain empty until after the time of Uter when it would be filled by a man not yet born, who had first found the Holy Grail.

Uter fell in love with Igerne, wife of the Duke of Tintagel, and quarreled with her husband. Through Merlin's magical art Uter was given the semblance of the duke, and visited the castle of Tintagel where Igerne was; and meanwhile the duke fell in battle. Uter then married Igerne, and King Lot of Orkanie married the duke's daughter.

A son was born to Uter and Igerne, named Arthur, and the child was secreted by Merlin. King Lot and his wife had four boys; Gauvain, Agrevain, Guerrehes and Gaheriet; another daughter of Uter, Morgue, became very learned, and was known as *Morgue la fée*.

After Uter's death, Arthur showed his powers by withdrawing a sword which was inserted in an anvil,—a feat which no other man could do,—and he was chosen King at Logres on the occasion of a great assembly at the season of Pentecost.

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It will readily be seen that the foregoing story is based on the material contained in Geoffrey of Monmouth's History and in Ware's *Brut*. The outline of the narrative (which is all that is given above) is practically unchanged from these earlier forms; the variations are in the details. Here, for example, it is Uter Pendragon, not Aurelius Ambrosius, who builds the memorial at Stonehenge. The Round Table is here built by Merlin or under his orders, and it accommodates fifty knights. In this narrative we find the first allusion to an empty seat at the Round Table which can only be occupied by one who had first found the Holy Grail. Igerne is here the wife of the Duke of Tintagel, not of Cornwall, as in the original story by Geoffrey.

That a third work was planned seems evident. In fact, at the end of the *Merlin* (according to one of the manuscripts), the author states that he would not tell more about Arthur until he had told about Alain the son of Brons—what sort of a man he was, and what sort of a life he led,—and also, about the enchantments of Britain. No work is known which corresponds exactly to this plan. A prose romance exists, giving the story of Perceval, the son of Alain, containing an account of the quest of the Holy Grail, and continuing the story

on to the death of Arthur. This is considered by some writers to represent the concluding part of Robert de Borron's trilogy, but others regard it as a much later work. It begins with the time of Alain's *death*, and therefore does not literally correspond with the plan announced by Borron. This discrepancy might be explained on the supposition that the author had modified his plan to some extent. On the other hand, there may have been a work, corresponding with the author's original plan, which has disappeared. The romance referred to is discussed in a later chapter.

CHAPTER V

THE CONTINUATIONS OF CHRÉTIEN, AND THE GAWAIN LITERATURE

CHRÉTIEN'S poem (see Chapter III) was continued by at least three different writers, at dates which cannot be definitely stated. One of these, whose name is given in different forms—Wauchier de Denain, Gautier de Denet, Gauchier de Doudain, Gauciers de Doudain, etc., wrote a section which follows Chrétien's own portion. Another, Manessier, contributed about 10,000 lines to close the work; while Gerbert (de Montreuil?) wrote about 15,000 lines which are interpolated in the manuscripts between Wauchier and Manessier. Thus, the poem, as we know it, is a combination of different elements whose construction covered more than fifty years. Many scholars consider that the first part of the Wauchier continuation was contributed by still another writer whom they call the Pseudo-Wauchier.

The continuator whose name appears in different manuscripts in different forms as stated above,

and who carried on the story after Chrétien's abrupt ending, has left a work which, curiously enough, also ends abruptly, and no explanation is given. The abrupt ending has been attributed by some to the author's death, and by others to a change of patron which may have caused a change in Wauchier's literary interests. The most natural view would appear to be that this effort to complete Chrétien's story was made within a short time after that author's death. Thus Wauchier would be, probably, about contemporary with Robert de Borron, but his continuation of Chrétien's *Perceval* was probably of later date than the original forms of de Borron's works which are mentioned in the previous chapter.

The theory has been advanced that the sources from which Wauchier drew in elaborating Chrétien's narrative were some writings which more nearly represented the original form of the story than did those which were used by Chrétien, but there is no consensus of opinion on this point.

Wauchier's work contains a mass of matter which is of no special interest—not even to the general reader, and much less to the Arthurian student. A curious feature is, that both Gawain and Perceval appear separately as heroes of the narrative, and with somewhat similar experiences.

It is related in the earlier part of the work how Gawain's journeys through Normandy and Brittany brought him to a castle by the seaside, and how he beheld there the dead body of a knight and a funeral procession. At meal time it is stated that "the Grail" entered and left the room by itself, and served them with food; but no statement is made to explain what "the Grail" was. Another article of importance seen by Gawain was a Lance from which flowed a stream of blood. It was explained that the Lance was the one which had pierced our Saviour's side on the Cross, but Gawain fell asleep while fuller explanations were being made. He awoke to find that the castle had disappeared.¹ The wanderings of Gawain and Perceval are related with tedious prolixity and with incidental mention of King Arthur's court, but without stating any incidents of interest in connection with the Holy Grail. Perceval's quest for the Grail was finally ended by his arrival at the Grail Castle, where he was welcomed by its keeper, the Fisher-King. The Grail was brought into the room by a lovely maiden; and a bleeding Lance and a broken Sword are features of the same procession; but no explanations are

¹ The preceding part is that which is attributed to the Pseudo-Wauchier.

given whereby these features may be understood. Perceval partially welded the broken Sword and was hailed as successor of the Fisher-King.

A noticeable feature of the Wauchier story is the prominence of Gawain. As in Chrétien's poem, the narrative changes back and forth from Perceval to Gawain and vice versa, without any clear connection between the acts of the two heroes. Moreover, in Wauchier Gawain finds the Grail—apparently before Perceval's second success in his search; and it is interesting to note that while Gawain sees the Grail merely as rendering a mysterious assistance in the serving of a meal, Perceval finds it, as in Chrétien, the prominent feature in a symbolical procession which accompanies the meal, and the Grail is a holy thing. Again, Gawain, sees the body of a knight on a bier, a cross, and a broken sword; and afterwards the bleeding lance. Perceval sees the lance and sword, but not the dead knight.

The incident of Gawain's finding the Grail recalls to our minds the *Elucidation* prologue to Chrétien's own work, in which this same fact is related. Wauchier refers as an authority for his narrative about Gawain to a certain Bleheris, corresponding apparently to the "Master Blihis" similarly mentioned in the foregoing prologue.

The inference is a fair one that both writers were cognizant of an independent and earlier story whose material they used, and in which Gawain played a part which is not a feature of any other extant Grail literature. Moreover, the simplicity of the tale of Gawain's visit and the fact that the Grail is therein only connected with the serving of food, seem to suggest that this version may come from an early stage of the legend's development. The early appearance of Gawain as an Arthurian character, and the existence of a considerable body of literature with Gawain as its hero, seem to confirm the theory that we are here in touch with an independent line of tradition which was drawn upon for the development of the Grail story into the shape known to us.

The direct proof of the antiquity of the Gawain stories is not easy to obtain, because the literature known to us is of a later date than the writings we are now considering. There are a number of Early English poems about Gawain and his deeds, mostly dating from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and in Early French literature are also found versions of some of these tales. Other independent French poems of a similar character also exist. These all show how widely spread was the Gawain literature of a later date,

and how important a position this knight held in the development of the Arthurian story. In the German poem *Diu Krone* written by Heinrich von dem Türlin at the beginning of the thirteenth century, the adventures of Gawain are related, corresponding in some respects to Chrétien's story, but here Gawain seeks the Grail as well as the Lance and he is the Grail finder.

The stories mentioned were not, however, original products of the period in which, in their existing shape, they seem to have been composed. The one entitled *Syr Gawayne and the Grene Knight* for example, is clearly traceable to ancient Celtic tradition. Its essential incident is the acceptance by Gawain at Arthur's court of a challenge from the Green Knight whereby one of them is to have one stroke with an axe (or sword) at the other, and the latter is to have the privilege of returning the stroke after the expiration of a year; Gawain wins the right to strike first and cuts off his adversary's head. The latter picks up his head, reminds Gawain about their next meeting and rides away. A year later Gawain, visiting a castle, is tested as to his honor by exposure to the wiles of his host's beautiful wife; and, as he withstands the test, he is spared by the Green Knight, who proves to be his host of the castle.

Unfortunately the existing Gawain literature is mostly of a later date than the subject of our present studies; and the evidence regarding its sources, and their remoteness in time, is circumstantial rather than direct. Nevertheless, it is clear that Gawain is closely connected with ancient Celtic tradition. In several of these stories there is a tendency to associate Gawain with supernatural features of the narrative and to attribute supernatural qualities to him—such, for example, as the increase and decrease of his strength with the waxing and waning of the day.

Gawain is first mentioned by William of Malmesbury, as Arthur's nephew and associated with that monarch. He appears also in Geoffrey of Monmouth's History, which followed; and in this he plays a prominent rôle, but the author apparently only repeats what he believes to be already generally known about Gawain.¹ Here as elsewhere in all the early literature he is described in flattering terms—always valiant, wise and courteous. The theory, mentioned above, that some early Grail literature, now lost, was the basis of Wauchier's work would account for the persistent and recurring references to Gawain's

¹ Cf. *Arthurian Material in the Chronicles*, Harvard Studies, &c., vol. x, Robert Huntington Fletcher, p. 94.

adventures in a story which has Perceval for its hero.¹

In respect to the Grail itself, its meaning, and its surroundings, we are still left in great uncertainty. Wauchier's story, as mentioned on a previous page, tells of two visits to the Grail Castle by two different persons, one of whom finds the Grail to be a mysterious server of food at the table, while the other finds it to be the chief object in a procession which apparently has some religious significance. The other objects of interest seen by the two visitors correspond in part but not entirely. Again, when Wauchier brings Perceval to the Grail Castle there is no reference to the mysterious necessity of asking certain questions—a very important feature of the poem which Wauchier was attempting to complete. Lastly, neither in Gawain's nor in Perceval's visit to the Grail Castle is there any mention of the father of the Fisher-King. Thus, the continuation of Chrétien's tale is strangely out of gear with the story which it professes to continue.

Menessier's continuation is next to be considered. Its precise date cannot be given, but its

¹ All this is discussed at some length by Miss Jessie L. Weston in her *Legend of Sir Perceval*, vols. i and ii. She believes that Gawain was the original Grail-winner.

text contains a reference to Joan, Countess of Flanders, which appears to fix the date between 1214 and 1227, since the Count himself was in prison during that interval and the Countess was the sole ruler. The work takes up the narrative at about the place where Wauchier left it, and is apparently an attempt to carry it on to a proper conclusion. It is here explained that the Grail was the vessel into which ran the Saviour's blood, and that the Lance was the one which had pierced His side. Reference is made to the journey of Joseph of Arimathea to Great Britain with the Grail in his care; and it is stated that the King of the Grail Castle was of Joseph's line. There is little of interest that is added to the history of Perceval, or to the material for the study of the Grail problem.

It is to be noted that Menessier makes little allusion to the Grail itself except to connect it with the Crucifixion, and to mention its effect in healing the wounds of two combatants, and also its power of supplying food for the Court. He attributes the Fisher-King's wound to a different cause from that which is given by the original author of the poem which he desires to complete! Also, he makes no allusion to the necessity of asking a question or to the healing effect of asking

it; but he says, on the contrary, that the Fisher-King is healed as a consequence of the execution of his brother's murderer at the hands of Perceval.

Thus another continuation of the poem is out of joint with the author's own beginning and we have a good illustration of the difficulties experienced in studying the Grail romances.¹

The other "continuator," Gerbert, is generally identified with Gerbert de Montreuil, an author of prominence whose literary activity was about the year 1225. His narrative is regarded by some as intended to be interpolated between Wauchier and Menessier, and by others as intended to supply an independent ending to Chrétien's poem.

Perceval's wanderings took him to King Arthur's court, where he saw at the Round Table a mysterious chair which represents a well-known feature in Grail literature, the Perilous Seat (*le Siège Perilous*). The seeker after the Grail would never succeed in his quest until he had first succeeded in sitting in this mysterious chair at great risk of physical danger. Perceval, however, accomplished the feat.

¹ Full abstracts of Mannesier's and Gerbert's continuations of Chrétien may be found in Potvin's edition of *Le Conte de Graal*, and in Nutt's *Studies on the Legend of the Holy Graal*.

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A vision which came to Perceval by night is given in a passage of special interest in which it is related that a prophecy was made to him that three brothers of his line would conquer Jerusalem. The allusion is to Godfrey of Bouillon, who wrested that city from the Saracens in the year 1099, and to his brothers Baldwin and Eustace who were associated with him. The heroic career of Godfrey, crowned by his great victory over the Saracens, had created a great popular interest in him, even to the extent of bringing a touch of the supernatural into the story of his life. A long time—possibly at least half a century—before the date of Gerbert's continuation of the *Perceval*, there was current a tradition that Godfrey was descended from the Knight of the Swan. This tradition was narrated in detail in a form of the Swan Knight legend which was current in the latter part of the twelfth century, and which in turn incorporated material from a more ancient legend known as the Legend of the Swan Children. This narrative states that the Swan Knight is one of seven children born with golden (or silver) chains around their necks, the removal of which changes the children into swans. The loss of one of these chains leaves one of the children permanently in the form of a swan, and it is this one

who leads the boat of his brother the Swan Knight to Nimégue where he brings help to the distressed Duchess of Bouillon, and finally marries her daughter. In this form of the legend the Swan Knight bears the name of Helyas. Godfrey, Baldwin, and Eustace were his grandsons.

Gerbert's lines relating the prophecy which was revealed to Perceval make a somewhat confused reference to the Legend of the Swan Children, as it is incorporated into the story of Helyas, the Swan Knight, and they proceed with the statement that the eldest of the Swan children would marry a wife, and would restore her dominions to her, and that they would beget a daughter who, in turn, would have three sons who would conquer Jerusalem, the Holy Sepulchre, and the true cross.

The theory has been advanced that some literary work was in existence which already connected Perceval with the Swan Knight, but proof of this is lacking. The more natural theory is that Gerbert introduced this passage into his "continuation" to give additional interest to his narrative about Perceval, especially through the connections of that hero with the romantic career of Godfrey of Bouillon.

Gerbert's ending is rather abrupt and incon-

clusive. It does not lead up to Menessier's part, which it should do if it were intended as an interpolation in a complete form; nor is it a satisfactory ending if intended as a closing section of the poem. It seems curious that there should be still another instance of incompleteness in the conglomerate work of finishing Chrétien's poem.

CHAPTER VI

THE QUESTE AND THE GRAND SAINT GRAAL

CHRÉTIEN'S work and its continuations, as also the romances of de Borron (in their original form), were written in verse. There were two early prose romances which occupy an important place in the Grail literature—*La Queste del Saint Graal* and *Le Grand St. Graal*. Definite statements cannot be made either in regard to the exact dates of their composition or in regard to their authorship. They are generally considered to have been composed in the early years of the thirteenth century, or possibly at the end of the twelfth century; but the existing texts present difficulties which make it impossible to say with certainty which of the two romances was written first, although the *Queste* is generally believed to be the older.¹

¹ The text of the *Queste* was edited and published by F. J. Furnivall of the Roxburgh Club in 1864 from French Manuscripts in the British Museum. A Welsh translation of an unknown French text, together with the English equivalent, was published by Robert Williams in 1876 under the title *Y Seint Graal*. In this

The *Queste* introduces Galahad, the son of Lancelot, as the Grail-seeker and Grail-finder. It would be useless to try and include the full details of this enormously extended narrative. A brief statement will suffice.¹

Lancelot is an important character in the narrative, but his unlawful love for Guinevere debarred him from the privilege of finding the Grail, so he is given a son, Galahad, to whom this great honor comes. The Grail itself is not particularly described, but the statement is made that it entered a room where the Knights of the Round Table were gathered, borne by unseen hands and accompanied by a bright light; and it appeared to be the means of bringing abundant food to those who were gathered at the feast. No one, however, saw the Grail itself, as it was covered with white samite. It disappeared as mysteriously as it came.

Reference is made to Joseph of Arimathea having come to Great Britain long previously bring-

latter form there are some variations in details from the known French forms, and the names of the characters are given in the Welsh equivalents; viz:

Gawain is called *Gwalchmai*, Perceval, *Peredur*, Guinevere *Gwenhwyvar*, Ywain *Owein*, Merlin *Merdhin*, and Galahad is here known as *Galaath*.

¹ A more detailed summary will be found in Alfred Nutt's *Studies on the Legend of the Holy Grail*. (London, 1888.)

ing the Grail. Galahad's wanderings and also Perceval's, and Gawain's are related at some length. Lancelot also journeyed seeking the Grail. At Castle Corbenic he again was a witness of the Grail's influence in providing abundant food. Galahad and Perceval went later to Castle Corbenic; and here Galahad's quest was ended.

In connection with this visit we find a great development of the ecclesiastical features which were noticed in de Borron's work described in Chapter IV. The son of Joseph of Arimathea (himself also called Joseph) appears as the first Bishop of Christendom; and Galahad's view of the Grail is obtained in connection with the celebration of the Mass. Our Lord Himself appeared and gave the Sacrament to Galahad stating that the Grail was the vessel used at the Last Supper. The result of Galahad's finding the Grail was to restore to health the Maimed King whose court was at Castle Corbenic. Galahad became King of the Grail, and finally died at the Castle.

The other one of these prose romances, the *Grand Saint Graal* (called also *Estoire del Saint Graal* and *Livre del Graal*) is substantially an amplification of Robert de Borron's *Joseph of*

Arimathea which was discussed in Chapter IV; and it is indeed an amplification. The narrative is expanded to an enormous extent and the details are extremely tedious. The narrative adds little of interest or importance to the Grail history; and a summary of the details here would be undesirable.¹

The *Queste* is ascribed in the manuscripts to Walter Map (or Mapes) whose life covered the last half of the twelfth century, and whose death occurred in or about the year 1209. He was made Archdeacon of Oxford in 1196. He was a well-known writer, and has been considered at various times and by various scholars as the author of a number of the Grail romances; but the trend of the latest critical study is adverse to this theory. In like manner the author of the *Grand St. Graal* is stated in the manuscripts to have been Robert de Borron, but this lacks general acceptance by scholars. In this case, as elsewhere, the statements regarding authorship which are found in the manuscripts themselves, if unsupported by corroborative evidence, are not considered to be authentic. The entire subject

¹ A full abstract of the *Grand Saint Graal* (as in the case of the *Queste*) may be found in Nutt's *Studies in the Legend of the Holy Grail*. (London, 1888).

is surrounded with uncertainty, which is increased by the fact that the extant manuscripts of both these romances evidently include changes and interpolations, and therefore do not represent their original forms.

These romances are worthy of special notice by reason of their introduction of Galahad as the Grail Knight in place of Perceval. In the *Queste*, Galahad is a prominent figure; he leads in seeking and finding the Grail, and heals the Maimed King; in the *Grand St. Graal*, he is a minor feature of the narrative, and is merely mentioned at the close of the romance as the Good Knight who healed the Maimed King.¹ The prominence of Lancelot in the *Queste* should be especially noted; in fact, the romance is more concerned with Lancelot than with the Holy Grail; and King Arthur occupies only a minor place. The two romances, especially the *Queste*, imply a knowledge of the romance of Lancelot, which we have yet to consider, and which we shall see was originally an independent work, woven later into the Grail cycle.

In these two prose romances we note an elaboration of the ecclesiastical characteristics already found in Borron's *Joseph*. So far is this carried

¹ In this latter romance, Galahad the son of Joseph must not be confused with the Good Knight who bore the same name.

that we have the incident of the consecration of Joseph as the first Bishop of Christendom—this being done by the hands of Our Lord Himself, and emphasized in the ceremonies which followed Galahad's arrival at Castle Corbenic. From the standpoint of the ecclesiastical authorities this was unorthodox. Its importance would depend on the view taken of the historical features of these romances. That these features have been regarded seriously by some, is shown in the idea of a Grail Church more important than the official Church, which we shall mention in a later chapter, as well as in the suggestion that the independence of the Early Celtic Church is thus indicated. It would seem, however, that these mediæval romances should not be taken as a serious basis for the development of such theories.

The reader will observe that although the ritualistic view of the Grail is an important feature of the *Queste*, the vessel is nevertheless also represented as moving by itself, and as a provider of food—an apparent confusion of ideas which is unexplained.

It should also be noted that the quest of the Lance, as well as that of the Grail, is mentioned, but no explanation is given with regard to the reason for undertaking it.

CHAPTER VII

WOLFRAM'S PARZIVAL

ONE of the most important and interesting of the Grail romances is the *Parzival* of Wolfram von Eschenbach. It appeared in the early years of the thirteenth century. The exact date of the author's birth and death are unknown, but his life covered the end of the twelfth century and the beginning of the thirteenth; and the date of this particular poem is placed approximately about 1210-1215. The poem bears a close relation to Chrétien's *Perceval*. The only available presentation of the work in English is a poetical rendering by Miss Jessie S. Weston, now unfortunately out of print.¹ The difficulty of finding elsewhere any English text, as well as the interesting character of the poem and its importance in the study of Grail literature, all combine to make the narrative a matter of special interest, and it is therefore given here with some detail.

¹ *Parzival*, a knightly epic, by Wolfram von Eschenbach, translated by Jessie L. Weston. London, David Nutt, 1894. Valuable notes accompany the translation.

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PARZIVAL is the son of Gamuret of Anjou and Herzeleide, a widowed Queen of Wales. He was born after his father's death. The mother tried to bring up her son in the simplicity of forest life; but he saw some knights (as in Chrétien's poem), was attracted by them, left his mother, and went to Arthur's court. On his way he met a maiden called Siguné, who told him she was his cousin and informed him of his illustrious ancestry.

Starting out thence on his adventurous journeys, his most important experience was his meeting with Queen Kondwiramur at Pelrapär in the Kingdom of Brobarz. He was able to render her some valuable service, won her love and married her.

One day Parzival started to seek his mother and inquire after her welfare. On his journey he came to a body of water on which were a number of fishing boats, and in one of them was a man clothed in rich raiment. Parzival inquired of him about a shelter for the night, and was directed to a castle where he himself would be Parzival's host. Parzival was received with distinction. A rich mantle was sent to him by the Queen of the castle, Répanse de Schoie. Then he was conducted to the great hall where he saw four hundred knights; and the King, who was ill, lay on a couch.

A squire entered, carrying a lance which bled from its point. He passed around the room and disappeared; and the company wept and wailed greatly as they seemed to think of some woe. Then a procession entered the hall; two maidens each holding a golden candlestick, then two bearing two stools, then four bearing tall tapers and four carrying a table of jacinth. Then came four maidens with lights, and two bearing sharp silver knives resting on cloths, which were laid on the jacinth table. Then followed six more maidens and then one of great beauty bearing aloft on a cushion "that thing which men call 'The Grail.'" She was the Queen Répanse de Schoie, and she was selected for this office by the Grail itself. She placed the Grail on the jacinth table, and the maidens made ceremonious steps and salutations. Tables were set for the four hundred knights, and food was served. Then one hundred squires took bread from the Grail and gave it to the knights; and food of all kinds was served by the Grail, according to the desires of the knights. A squire entered bearing a sword and sheath decorated with jewels, which the King gave to Parzival.

As the feast ended, Parzival saw through an open door an old man lying on a couch, but nothing was said about him. Parzival retired for

the night after receiving every attention, and slept until the next noon. He found his horse ready, but the castle empty; and as he left it he heard a voice saying that he had lost a chance for fame by not asking about the wonders. As he passed on, he met Siguné, and learned from her that he had been at the mysterious castle of Monsalväschen in the kingdom called Terre de Salväschen. It was once inhabited by Titurel, and had been bequeathed by him to his son Frimutel and was now occupied by the latter's invalid son Anfortas. Siguné noticed his sword, which she said had magic qualities; but when she found he had failed to ask about the mysteries at the castle she bitterly reproached Parzival. Had he done so the King would have been released from his burden, and he himself would have won great fame.

In the course of his wanderings he met King Arthur, was invited to become a Knight of the Round Table, and was duly received into that distinguished body; but Kondrie the sorceress appeared, hideous in looks, riding a mule. She told Arthur he had dishonored the Round Table by receiving Parzival; and she told Parzival he was disgraced by his failure to ask about the mysteries at Monsalväschen and thus to bring peace to the suffering Fisher King. Kondrie also explained

about Parzival's high birth and distinguished ancestry.

Sundry adventures of both Gawain and Parzival are related, which need not claim our attention. Parzival finally arrived at a hermitage which was occupied by Siguné. She told him she was nourished by food from the Grail, brought weekly by Kondrie. He hastened on, hoping to meet the sorceress, and thus learn where the Grail castle was situated. He met and overcame a knight who hailed from Monsalväschen. After a time he met some pilgrims who rebuked him for going in armor on that day, and told him it was Good Friday. He came to the cavern of Trevrezent the hermit, and learned from him many of the marvels connected with the Grail and its service. Many knights were at Monsalväschen whence they went on distant journeys. Their life and strength came from a wondrous stone called *lapsit* (*lapis?*) *exillis* which revivified the Phoenix, and had the power of giving perpetual youth to those who daily looked at it. On each Good Friday a dove came from Heaven and placed a Host upon the stone which thus renewed its power of conveying all good things to mankind. A mystic writing on the Grail was the means of notifying any of its attendants that some service was required. In the

course of conversation Parzival learned that the hermit was his uncle—his mother's brother—and that his mother had died of grief over his departure for a knightly career. A younger sister of the hermit was Répanse de Schoie who always tended the Grail. Anfortas the Grail King was the hermit's brother, who, as eldest son, became Lord of the Grail on the death of their father Frimutel. Anfortas neglected to hold himself aloof from earthly love, as he should have done; he loved a lady and became her knight, and thus brought sorrow and woe to himself and his followers. He received a wound in the thigh from a poisoned spear in the hand of a heathen knight; and nothing would cure it. The knights prayed to the Grail for help, and were informed by the mystic writing that a knight would come to the castle, and if on the first night he should spontaneously ask about the King's sufferings, the King would be restored, and the knight should inherit the guardianship of the Grail. Parzival confessed to his uncle that he had been at Monsalväschen and had failed to ask the question. Trevrezent further told Parzival that Anfortas was often carried to a lake called Brimbane where he amused himself by fishing. The spear which Parzival saw, was at certain seasons plunged into Anfortas' wound and brought

relief from pain although causing woe to the onlookers. One service rendered by the Grail was to send one of its knights to rule over a land whose people had lost their monarch and had asked God to send one. Trevrezent also explained that the old man whom Parzival had seen on a couch at the Grail castle was Titurel, his great-grandfather, the first King of the Grail; he was ill, but was kept alive by the power of the Grail.

Again the narrative shifts to Gawain and relates various incidents of no special importance for our present studies. Parzival continued his journeys, and one day he met a knight in magnificent armor. They engaged in a mighty contest without definite result, and while resting they entered into conversation and discovered that they were half-brothers—the newcomer being Feirefis Angevin. They went together to Arthur's court, and received a warm welcome. A maiden, richly dressed, but heavily veiled, joined them there shortly afterwards. Her mantle was of costly velvet, and was decorated with figures of turtle-doves—the badge of the Grail. She made special obeisance to Parzival and revealed herself as Kondrie the sorceress. She announced to Parzival that the Grail had decreed that he should be its King, and that he should bring to the Grail-

Kingdom his wife Kondwiramur and their twin sons Lohengrin and Kardeiss, born after Parzival's departure. She also told him that by asking the mysterious question Amfortas would be healed.

After an interval of four days Parzival, Feirefis, and Kondrie set out for Montsälvasch; but, before starting, Parzival told the assembled multitude the story of the Grail as he had heard it from Trevrezent—explaining how no one could find it save he whom God called to the task. They finally came to the Grail castle and were received gladly. Being brought into the presence of Amfortas, Parzival prayed for the ending of the former's woes, and turning to him said "What aileth thee here, mine Uncle?" Promptly healing came to Amfortas, and his face was filled with beauty; and Parzival was hailed King of the Grail.

Hearing that Kondwiramur was approaching, he rode to meet her, had a joyful meeting, and saw for the first time his twin sons. Parzival turned his inherited possessions over to his son Kardeiss who was crowned King, and returned to them with the retinue. Parzival, Kondwiramur, and Lohengrin went on to Montsälvasch, and received a warm welcome. The company gathered in the great hall. The procession of maidens took place.

Feirefis was lost in admiration of Répanse de Schoie who bore the Grail, but he did not seem to see the Grail itself; and this was explained by the fact that he was unbaptized, so the sight of it was withheld from him. He consented to be baptized in order to win the hand of the lovely Grail-maiden, and the ceremony took place the next morning. After some days Feirefis and the bride he had won set out for their distant home in the East; and there Répanse de Schoie gave birth to a son called Prester John who became very famous.

Wolfram's poem ends with a short reference to the later life of Lohengrin, who was directed by the Grail to go to the assistance of the Duchess of Brabant. This lady was besought by the counts of her realm to take to herself a husband, but she would marry only him who should be sent by God. Lohengrin came from Montsalvasch to Antwerp in a swan-boat, and was married to the Duchess. They lived happily and had children, but finally the Duchess broke a promise which he had exacted to the effect that she would never ask his name or whence he came; and Lohengrin returned to the swan-boat to the house of the Grail, leaving his sword, his horn and his ring as mementos of him.

The text of Wolfram's poem contains a statement by the author concerning its origin. He says he obtained it from a Provençal writer named Kiot who found in Toledo an ancient Arabic manuscript written by Flegetanis, a heathen, which told for the first time the story of the Grail. Having been baptized and converted, Kiot was able to read the manuscript, since it would not have been permitted that this story should have been transmitted to posterity by heathen hands. The manuscript stated that this mysterious thing called the Grail had been brought from Heaven by angels, and left in charge of baptized men of high character who guarded it. Kiot sought diligently in the chronicles of various countries to find some trace of the people who were thus guarding the Grail, and finally discovered it in the chronicles of Anjou where he found the records of the family of Mazadan (the common ancestor of Parzival and of Arthur), and also the story of Titurel—the earliest Grail King whose name is mentioned—and his descendants.

The assertions of mediæval writers about the origins of their works are so often manifestly untrustworthy—in whole or in part—that we need not accept this account as literally true. It is

considered by some to be entirely fanciful, especially as there is no other trace of any work by Kiot, or in fact any other reference to him. On the other hand, it is maintained by writers of high authority that whatever the *ultimate* source of Wilfram's poem, its *immediate* source was very likely some such work as he mentions; so that Kiot may be in fact an actual person. It should be mentioned that there exist a number of noteworthy correspondences between the story of *Parzival* (as related above) and the actual history of Anjou.¹

The close general correspondence between Wolfram's *Parzival* and Chrétien's *Perceval* has been mentioned. At the close of his poem Wolfram accused Chrétien of errors in his work; and there is a plain inference that both these writers drew from the same source. This is now the best supported theory, although some have held that Chrétien's poem was itself the source of Wolfram's. The details of the correspondences—and also the differences—between these poems need not be recited here. Their value lies in the material thus afforded for a critical study of the two poems.

Of course, the central point of interest is the

¹ These are given in detail in Miss Weston's *Parzival*, vol. i, Appendix A.

Grail itself and Wolfram's understanding of it. This latter is not easy to ascertain. On the one hand Wolfram represents it as a *stone*, differing in this respect from all other writers. On the other hand, we cannot overlook the reference to the periodical rejuvenation of the Grail's power by means of a Host brought from Heaven, as well as the fact that the presence of the Grail was not made manifest to the eyes of those who had not been baptized. Both of these last named features established a connection with the ecclesiastical or, rather Christianized view of the Grail which is seen in the French romances, even though there is no reference by Wolfram to its identification either with the Cup into which the Lord's blood flowed, or with the Cup of the Last Supper. The food supplying power of the Grail is a noteworthy feature which increases the puzzle of ascertaining what Wolfram's conception actually was. The problem thus presented is one of great intricacy and can only be thus briefly indicated here.

A few points of interest remain for brief allusion. Wolfram's narrative of Parzival's ancestors, and the consistent development of the story from this beginning, are in marked contrast with the sudden and inexplicable commencement of Chrétien's story of *Perceval*. Klingsor the magician, intro-

duced by Wolfram, does not appear in Chrétien's poem. The Grail messenger, appearing in both poems as the Loathly Damsel, here bears a name, Kondry (Kundry). Lancelot is one of the characters in the tale, but is not here a seeker after the Grail. Gawain enters the narrative as one of the knights of King Arthur's court, and experiences a number of adventures which bear little or no relation to the narrative of Parzival's doings. Gawain's quest in this poem is not for the Lance (as in Chrétien) but for the Grail itself; but, strangely enough, he drops out of the story without accomplishing his object. Generally speaking, the Gawain material used by Wolfram follows the same lines as that used by Chrétien, and was undoubtedly taken from the same source.

The brief section about Lohengrin's services which, as Knight of the Grail, he rendered to the Duchess of Brabant is apparently due to a desire on the part of Wolfram to connect the Grail tradition with the legend of the Swan Knight, then already widely known—thus adding to the interest of the poem.

CHAPTER VIII

THE LANCELOT AND TRISTAN LEGENDS

IN the introductory chapter allusion was made to the fact that the traditions pertaining to King Arthur and to the Holy Grail were originally distinct, being later united in the course of the gradual growth of the Arthurian cycle. Other traditional material, originally independent, was also in like manner worked into the Arthurian fabric. The stories about Gawain, briefly mentioned in Chapter V, afford an illustration of this; and still another is shown in the amalgamation of the ancient Merlin legend with that of King Arthur.

In the story of *Lancelot* we find a similar instance of the use of independent traditions. There was not, however, an absorption of a romance existing in a well-defined form. It is believed that there were scattered tales about this hero which were available to the Arthurian writers, and that the romance reached its final form through a gradual development. It will be sufficient for our present

purpose to allude to the earliest known forms of the legend, and then give a brief account of those which show its latest and fullest development in the period of the other romances we are considering. It is interesting to note that this knight, so well-known and so prominent in the Arthurian cycle, is unknown to the Welsh Arthurian literature.

The earliest known mention of Lancelot is in the poem *Érec* of Chrétien de Troyes, referred to in Chapter III, where he appears as a Knight of the Round Table. He also appears in two other poems of the same author; *Cligés* and *Le Chevalier de la Charette*. In the last-mentioned work Lancelot appears for the first time as the lover of Guinevere. He rescues her from Méléagant who had abducted her. There is no indication of an earlier use of this incident.

A poem, *Lanzelet*, known only in a German version, gives an extended account of this hero. Its author was Ulrich van Zatzikhoven and its date was the end of the twelfth century¹ or the beginning of the thirteenth century.² It was based upon a French original, now lost, and we

¹ Cf. *Etudes Sur les Romans de la Table Ronde* by Gaston, Paris, Romania, vol. x.

² Cf. *Legend of Sir Lancelot du Lac* by Jessie L. Weston.

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have no definite knowledge of the age of this latter. According to this poem, Lancelot was the son of King Pant of Genewis and his Queen Clarine—the latter being the sister of King Arthur. The child was stolen by a water fairy, a queen residing in Meide-lant. Lancelot was brought up without knowing his name and origin; these were to be revealed to him after he had conquered the strongest knight on earth, Iweret. Lancelot became a knight, had various adventures, and finally killed Iweret. He defeated Valerin who was planning to carry away Queen Guinevere. Lancelot was attached to King Arthur's court, and took part in various adventures, in which Gawain, Tristan, and other knights shared. Later, he assisted Arthur and others in rescuing the Queen from a magic castle.

There is also a long compilation of poems, about 87,000 lines in all, which is known as the *Dutch Lancelot* although it contains entire romances which do not relate to this hero. In its manuscript form it belongs to the early part of the fourteenth century, but it represents material of a considerably greater age. The poems are translated from French originals and are not of one authorship. The work originally comprised four books, of which only the last three are known.

The loss of the first book leaves us without an important part of the Lancelot story. The second book relates a large number of adventures, some of which correspond with the work we shall mention in the next paragraph. Gawain is here called Walwein. Part of the *Perceval* story is included.

The most important work relating to this subject is an enormous compilation known as the *Prose Lancelot*. This also, like the *Dutch Lancelot*, covers a much broader field than its name would indicate.

The part of the *Prose Lancelot* which deals particularly with Lancelot himself has more to do with King Arthur's court than with the Holy Grail. Lancelot's early life in care of Viviane, the Lady of the Lake, is related at some length, and his reception into knighthood at Arthur's court, and infatuation for Queen Genievre (Guinevere). The tale includes an account of the rescue of the Queen by Lancelot from her abduction by Méléagan. Gauvain (Gawain) is a character of importance who takes part in the quest of the Grail. In the course of the latter's wanderings he reached the Grail castle, where he saw the mysterious treasure, which appeared to be in the shape of a vase, but neither of wood, nor metal nor stone.

Its presence at the feast was accompanied by choice and abundant food for all. The next day an old man told him he had been at the Castle Corbenic. A hermit, whom he had found at the close of day, explained to him that the vase he had seen was the Holy Grail which has received the Blood of Our Lord, and told him he had not been in a state of grace sufficient to be allowed to partake of the food which was served by the Grail. Gauvain then continued his search for Lancelot which had thus been interrupted. The narrative does not add much material for the Grail story, but the romance is of importance in the critical examination of this literature.

The *Livre d'Agravain*, which follows the foregoing in this manuscript, may be considered as a second part of the *Lancelot* story. The following incidents are the only ones which need have our attention. Lancelot visited the Castle Corbenic, and was received by a handsome knight who was King Pelles of *la terre foraine*, the last descendant of Joseph, brother of Alain, to whom Josephé had committed the Holy Grail. Pelles knew that Lancelot or his son would deliver the land from the strange adventures which were constantly occurring. Here Lancelot saw the Grail under circumstances similar to those under which Gau-

vain had the same experience. Afterwards, through the magical art of Brisane, Lancelot was led to beget a child of the King's daughter, who was the bearer of the Grail in the ceremony which Lancelot witnessed. This child *Galahad* appears in the *Queste* romance, previously mentioned.

There are other works in which Lancelot appears, but they do not call for mention here. Enough has been given above to indicate the general scheme of the traditions connected with him. He does not appear in the earliest Arthurian romances; but he seems to have been brought rather rapidly into the Arthurian cycle, and to have become quickly one of its most prominent characters.

The Lancelot narrative as related in the *Prose Lancelot* apparently includes independent stories, assimilated and revised by a compiler. The adventures of Lancelot and Gauvain result in a succession of quests, each one seeking the other for causes not always clear; and other knights whose names are continually appearing in the Arthurian romances take part in these quests. The details are tedious in the last degree.

The mutual attachment of Guinevere and Lancelot is a familiar and prominent feature of the narrative. Lancelot's fidelity to the Queen

is emphasized, but the latter's infidelity to Arthur is passed over.

Another instance of the incorporation of independent material into the Arthurian cycle is found in the romance of *Tristan*. Originally of Celtic extraction, it was worked over by Continental writers of the twelfth century who may have had before them a French romance, now lost. Chrétien de Troyes refers to a work of his own on this subject which must have been written about the middle of the twelfth century, but it has never been discovered. Two French poems of about that date are known; they are by writers named Berol or Beroul and Thomas.¹ There were also two German poems by Eilhart von Oberge and Gottfried von Strassburg. These works give variants of the same main theme, but a discussion of their contents would be outside the scope of this book.

There is, however, one point of interest to be

¹ The poem of Thomas has been rendered into English prose by Roger Sherman Loomis, *The Romance of Tristram and Ysolt* (E. P. Dutton & Co., 1923). Only a part of Thomas' poem remains, but a Norse translation was made in 1226 for King Haakon of Norway by a monk named Robert, and this, in connection with the existing part of Thomas' work, has provided the material for the English rendering referred to. The reference to Breri is from the hand of Thomas himself.

noted in passing viz: that in Thomas' work he alludes to the many versions of the tale of "Tristram," and says that none of them correspond with the work of Breri who was an authority on all such tales. Here is another reference to that writer who was already mentioned in Chapter III as an important contributor to the early Arthurian and Grail literature, but whose work has never been discovered. Thomas' work was independent of Arthurian connections; but Eilhart brought Tristan to the court of King Arthur where he won many honors.

There is also an enormous French prose work of the twelfth century, commonly called the *Prose Tristan*¹ in which the references to this hero are greatly elaborated in details. Tristan is brought to Arthur's court where he becomes a Knight of the Round Table. Tristan's love for Iseult is the central thought of the romance, and they die together in the kingdom of Cornwall. Lancelot, Gauvain, Perceval and Galahad are characters in the narrative; and mention is made of Castle Corbenic and the Fisher King, and the quest of the Grail.

An elaborate summary of the narrative will be found in *Le Roman en Prose de Tristran*, by E. Loseth, Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études, Paris, 1890.

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The story of Tristan was greatly elaborated by Sir Thomas Malory in his *Morte Darthur* written about three centuries later than the works mentioned above. In this form it is well-known to modern readers. It is not necessary here to discuss the details of the wonderful love story which the Tristan romance presents even in its early forms. Our present reference is limited to the brief statement regarding its absorption into the Arthurian cycle.

Wagner's well-known opera relates an approximation to the early form of the legend, but it omits the narrative of Tristan's early life leading up to his voyage to bring Iseult to King Marc at Tintagel, as well as his marriage to the other Iseult ("aux blanches mains") and it gives a different version of Tristan's death.

CHAPTER IX

VARIOUS ROMANCES

THERE are still a number of romances included in the great collection of materials which is available to the student of this early literature. In view of the narratives presented in the preceding pages it will be unnecessary to give full details of those which remain for our present consideration, nor will it be practicable to treat them in chronological order, since there is no consensus of opinion among scholars on this point.

PEREDUR

This is a Welsh prose romance whose full title is *Peredur ab Evrawc*, i.e., Peredur the Son of Evrawc. It is one of the tales included in the *Red Book of Hergest*, mentioned in Chapter II. The introduction of the hero as a boy of simple character who became a knight, corresponds with the opening of Chrétien's narrative. Peredur visited an aged fisherman in the castle where he dwelt, and attended a feast there. At the feast he saw a great spear (or lance) from which three streams of blood were flowing; and there was great wailing on the

part of the onlookers. Then came two maidens bearing a salver on which was a man's head, and the wailing continued. Other incidents are related which are more or less in correspondence with the adventures of Perceval, but which do not add important details to the Grail story already related. The romance ends with the capture of the Castle of Wonders by King Arthur and his men, whom Peredur had joined.

There is much difference of opinion about the origin of this story and its position in Arthurian literature. Some authorities consider that it is based on Chrétien's work, and consequently of later date than that. The plot is essentially the same as that of the story of Perceval, but, if derived therefrom, the absence of all reference to the Grail in a story which resembles so closely the earliest known Grail story is indeed a puzzling feature; and this omission is the more remarkable when we see the Lance mentioned with the mystery of the Grail castle surrounding it. We may be here in touch with some line of tradition which reaches back to ancient Celtic times.¹

¹ Cf. *Essai sur la composition du roman Gallois de Peredur* by Mary Rhys Williams; Paris, Honoré Champion, 1909. Prof. W. A. Nitze, reviewing this essay alludes to the Lance as "one of the wonders of the Celtic otherworld." (Modern Language Notes vol. xxv., 1901.)

THE DIDOT—PERCEVAL

In the discussion of Robert de Borron's trilogy in Chapter IV the uncertainty in regard to the third member of the trilogy was mentioned; and it was stated that a certain prose romance was considered by some scholars to be a prose version of this work.

The best known manuscript of this prose romance of *Perceval* is called the *Didot* manuscript owing to the fact that it was owned for many years by M. Firmin-Didot. This manuscript is now at the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. The part of the manuscript which contains this story of *Perceval* is commonly known as the “*Didot-Perceval*.”

The narrative begins with the coronation of Arthur, and thus continues the story which was related in Borron's *Merlin*. After the coronation Merlin explained to the barons the interesting items attaching to Arthur's birth and early life; he also explained to Arthur how the Round Table had been made for his father Uter Pendragon, as the previous one was made for Joseph of Arimathea; and he urged Arthur to establish the Knights of the Round Table. Merlin also told about the Grail which was at the Fisher King's Castle, and said that the King was old and sick

and could only be cured by the coming of a valiant knight of high character who would ask him about the mysteries, and that then the enchantments of Britain would end.

Perceval is the hero of this romance. His prowess as a knight is related in detail, and also his successful occupation of the Perilous Seat at the Round Table. After much wandering he finally came to a river and saw three men fishing in a boat. The principal occupant of the boat expressed a wish that Perceval would come to his house. Perceval accepted the invitation and finally arrived at the castle where he was cordially welcomed. Servants carried the host, an old man, into the hall where he was waiting. This was the Fisher King, the father of Alein le Gros, and grandfather of Perceval. While a meal was being served a servant entered bearing a lance from which issued a drop of blood; then came a maiden who carried two silver plates (*tailloers*); and then a servant with a vessel in which was the blood of our Lord; and before which, all bowed reverently. Perceval would have asked about these things had he not feared to displease his host. He thought of the incident all night. In the morning he could find no one in the castle, so he rode forth again, and after some time he met a

damsel weeping, who called him by name, Perceval le Gallois, and told him he was to be pitied, since he had been at the house of the rich Fisher King, his grandfather, and had failed to ask about the Grail.

After wandering for seven years he finally found the Grail Castle again, saw the Grail, asked the question, and caused the recovery of the King. The latter learned that Perceval was his grandson. He explained to the youth that the Lance belonged to Longis who pierced the Saviour's side, and that the Grail was the vessel into which His blood flowed. He then taught Perceval the secret words which the Lord taught Joseph in the prison; and then he was carried away by angels.¹

There are other works which have been suggested as possibly supplying the material of the missing third part of Robert de Borron's trilogy, but no such identification has been satisfactorily established, so the problem is yet unsolved.²

¹ Cf. *Legend of Sir Perceval* by Miss Jessie L. Weston, vol. ii. She describes another MS. at Modena, Italy, which gives practically the same version. After a detailed critical consideration she concludes that the romance preserved in those two manuscripts is actually a prose rendering of the missing third part of Robert de Borron's trilogy. There is however, much difference of opinion among scholars with regard to this theory, some believing that the romance is a late and independent work.

² NOTE: An abstract of the material comprised in the Didot-Perceval can be found in Nutt's *Studies on the Legend of the Holy Grail*, and also in Hucher's *Saint Graal*.

THE MERLIN CONTINUATIONS

The story of Merlin as related by Robert de Borron (see Chapter IV) was continued by other writers, using Borron's name. These continuations, or extensions, require notice here because they supply elements of importance in the later development of Arthurian literature.

One of these continuations is found in the Merlin section of what is known as the *Vulgata Version* of the Arthurian romances. This Vulgate Version consists of an enormous compilation of various Arthurian and Grail romances in French prose, which is found, with modifications, in a large number of manuscripts. It includes, among other works, *L'Estoire del Saint Graal* (corresponding to the *Joseph of Arimathea*), *Merlin*, *Lancelot*, *Queste*, and *Mort Artu*. A reprint of one of the manuscript versions of this great collection has been issued by Dr. H. O. Sommer under the auspices of the Carnegie Institution at Washington. The original compilation was probably made early in the thirteenth century, and a special interest for Arthurian scholars arises from this early collection into one work of so many of the principal elements of the Arthurian cycle. There is much difference of opinion about the versions of the various romances which are found

in this work; but in respect to the *Merlin* proper it may be said that the version corresponds with the prose romance of that name which was written by Robert de Borron.

The narrative of this continuation begins after the coronation of Arthur. It relates the King's wars at home and abroad. Reference is made to the presence of the Grail and the Lance in the kingdom of Logres (England) and to the Quest by the Knights of the Round Table. For our present study there is not much of importance to mention.

Arthur married Genievre, daughter of King Leodegan of Carmelide. Merlin went to Brittany and met there Viviane¹ who was greatly interested in Merlin's magic powers, and promised him her love after he had taught her his magic. Afterwards Viviane enchanted Merlin and shut him up in a prison.

The other continuation of the Merlin story is found in only one manuscript—the so-called Huth manuscript in the British Museum. The original story of Borron is given as in Chapter IV., and then follows the continuation, which has been called the *Suite du Merlin*. It is, in the main,

¹ She was the Lady of the Lake in the *Prose Lancelot* (see Chapter VIII) who carried Lancelot away and brought him up.

independent of the continuation found in the Vulgate Manuscript mentioned above. This romance treats of the later life and exploits of King Arthur.

One interesting feature is the incident connected with the sword *Escalibor*. Arthur desired to obtain a better sword than the one he had, and Merlin told him of a marvelous one which was in a lake where some fairies lived. They visited the lake, and saw an arm rising out of the water and holding a sword. A maiden undertook to get the sword, and did so, much to Arthur's pleasure.

Arthur's marriage to Gennevre is related. She was the daughter of King Leodegan who owned the Round Table established by Merlin for Uter. With his marriage Arthur obtained possession of the Round Table.

Merlin's love for Viviane is related in a similar way to that of the Vulgate narrative, but with some changes in details.

THE MORT ARTU

This romance, as its name indicates, deals with the closing of the career of the Great King, and his mysterious disappearance. A paraphrase of it forms a part of the well-known work produced by Sir Thomas Malory in the fifteenth century and

known as *La Morte Darthur*. This title, properly belonging only to the last member of the cycle, was erroneously applied to the whole of Malory's work. The original *Mort Artu* was written in the early part of the thirteenth century. The earliest existing form of the romance is that in which it is found in the Vulgate cycle, in combination with other Arthurian romances.¹ It contains no Grail incidents.

The narrative is to a large extent given up to the relations of Lancelot and Guinevere, and it also alludes to Lancelot's interest in the maiden of Ascalot. It also tells of the break in the relations between the King and the Queen. Toward the close it describes the combat in which Arthur was mortally wounded and tells how he commanded Girflet to cast his sword *Escalibor* into a lake, and how a hand rose from the water and received the sword. Then came a boat filled with women, who took Arthur away.

There are two English works which bear this title, and which it may be well to mention here. They are both of the fourteenth century.

The poem *Le Morte Arthur* exists in only one

¹ The *Mort Artu* has been edited by Prof. J. Douglas Bruce, and published by Max Niemeyer of Halle, Germany. A brief abstract of the narrative can also be found in *Les Romans de la Table Ronde* by M. Paulin, Paris.

manuscript which is in the British Museum. The narrative is substantially the same as that of the French *Mort Artu* but with some variations in the details. Among these may be mentioned that the command to throw the sword into the lake is given to Bedevere, not Girflet; that Arthur says he will go to "Aveloune" (Avalon) to be healed; and that Arthur and Guinevere are both buried at Glastonbury.

There is also an English alliterative poem entitled *Morte Arthure* which is contained only in a manuscript at the library of Lincoln Cathedral, called the Thornton Manuscript after Archdeacon Thornton who copied at least a good part of it about the year 1440. Many incidents mentioned in other romances are repeated here. Lancelot's love for Guinevere is not mentioned, nor is the incident of the disposal of the sword in the lake. The author is unknown. One theory is that he was the Scottish poet Huchown.

PERLESVAUS

This is a French prose romance which was translated into English by Sebastian Evans and published in London in 1898 under the title *The High History of the Holy Grail*.

The romance is of great length, and much of it

is uninteresting. It treats to a large extent of matters unconnected with the Holy Grail, but nevertheless it contains features which have claimed the careful attention of those who have undertaken the critical study of this literature. Perceval, Lancelot and Gawain are all engaged in the Grail quest, and all of them reached the Grail Castle, but only Perceval and Gawain saw the holy vessel—the former being the first to succeed in the search. In general, the priority of Perceval is marked. An interesting feature of the tale is that it is dated at a time when Arthur's court was in a state of demoralization, and when the Knights of the Round Table were much reduced in numbers.

Another interesting feature is, that a second brother of the Grail King is introduced—the King of the Chastel Mortel, who was as wicked as his brothers were good. This character is found in no other Grail romance. There is no mention of the Perilous Seat. There is a religious tone to the entire romance. References are made to the work of effacing the bad law and extolling the new law, which show that the author was not merely writing a knightly romance, but that he had also in view a plan of using the Arthurian material in the interest of religion.

This work has been in many respects a puzzle to those who have subjected it to a critical investigation.¹ Opinions differ about its date and importance in the Grail cycle. Dr. Evans maintained that it is the original Book of the Grail, but this view is not widely held.

SYR PERCYVELLE DE GALLES

There is a middle-English poetical romance bearing this title which exists only in the Thornton manuscript at the Library of Lincoln Cathedral. It probably dates from the fourteenth century, the manuscript itself being about a century later. The early part of the narrative follows the same general lines as Chrétien's poem; the latter part gives a different narrative which has no special interest in connection with our present studies. Like the *Peredur*, it omits reference to the Grail. The resemblances between the *Syr Percyvelle* and the *Peredur*, and the resemblance of both of them to an ancient Celtic story "The Lay of the Great Fool," have suggested a derivation from some primitive form of the Perceval legend which antedates Chrétien and was of Celtic origin. There are widely different opinions in regard to the

¹ Cf. *The old French Grail Romance Perlesvaus*, by W. A. Nitze. John Murphy and Co., Baltimore, 1902.

origin of this romance and its relative position towards the other romances which it resembles.¹

DIU KRONE

A German poem by Heinrich Von dom Türlin, and bearing this title, dates from the early part of the thirteenth century. It apparently derives from both Chrétien's *Perceval* and Wolfram's *Parzival*. Certain features indicate a possible use of other sources as yet unidentified.

Its hero is Gawain. His visit to the Grail Castle in company with Lancelot and Calogreant is described. They were shown into a splendid hall where they saw an old man richly dressed lying on a bed. Knights and ladies entered, and also a youth bearing a sword which he laid in front of the old man. They all sat down to meat. His two companions fell asleep, but Gawain kept awake and saw the Grail procession—first two maidens with lights, then two knights with a Lance, then two maidens with a salver (?) made of gold and jewels. Then came a beautiful woman

¹ Cf. *Sir Perceval of Galles*, by Reginald Harvey Griffith (University of Chicago Press, 1911); also a review by Prof. J. D. Bruce in the *Romanic Review*, vol. iv, 1913; also *A Guide to the Middle English Metrical Romances*, by Anna H. Billings, Yale Studies in English 1901. An abstract of the narrative is given in this last named volume; also in Nutt's *Studies on the Legend of the Holy Grail*.

with a weeping maiden in attendance, the former carrying a jewelled ornament like a reliquary. The Lance was laid on a table and it shed three drops of blood into the salver. The reliquary, which contained a piece of bread, was laid also on the table, and the old man partook of the bread and the blood. Gawain asked the meaning of all this, and immediately all were filled with joy. He was told he had seen the Grail, which no one had previously seen except Parzival who failed to ask about it. The old man and his male companions, although apparently living, had been really dead, but were delivered from suffering by the questions which Gawain asked. The beautiful woman and her companions had been through their purity of character entrusted with the care of the Grail. Gawain won the possession of the sword which would protect him against all dangers. The next morning the old man and his retainers vanished. Gawain released Kay from prison where he had been thrown for attempting to see the Grail; and he finally returned to Arthur's court.

One of the incidents in the poem is the visit of Gawain to *Das Meide-land* inhabited only by maidens, ruled by a queen, evidently suggesting the Irish Isle of Women in the Other-World.

CHAPTER X

REVIEW

FROM the survey of the literary works mentioned in the preceding chapters it will be seen that so far as the *Arthurian* material is concerned there will be needed very little additional comment. King Arthur may, or he may not, have been a historical character; and even in the former case, the story of his career as related in the preceding pages may be largely fictitious. The essential fact is, that the literature we have discussed gives a fairly consistent narrative of King Arthur's career, and that it is the foundation of Sir Thomas Malory's great work written toward the close of the fifteenth century (see Chapter XIII), which, in turn, was the source of inspiration of that modern literature whence King Arthur's fame is best known to the world.

On the other hand, with respect to the Grail material, the reader will by this time need no further evidence to verify the statement in Chapter I, that a perusal of the contents of these

romances would reveal a tiresome repetition. In the critical study of this literature details which seem at first sight to be of minor interest may nevertheless prove to be of great importance. The problems raised by such study are many in number and intricate in character. No one who has not made a beginning in the study of the Grail literature has the slightest conception of its enormous extent and its baffling difficulties.

In the present chapter we now review briefly some of the curious features which may be noted by comparing the various narratives, and observing closely their reference to the Grail itself, the Grail-Keeper, the Grail-Seeker, the Bleeding Lance and the Sword, with the object of indicating (necessarily in a superficial way) the puzzling problems which claim the attention of students of this literature.

The personage known as the Fisher-King (also Rich Fisher, and Rich Fisher King) is one of the most mysterious features of the Grail legend. In the earliest of the French romances (that of Chrétien) he is discovered by Perceval in the act of fishing, which seems to be the only reason for the title. No indication is given that any fish is caught; and, in fact, it is only on Perceval's first visit to the Grail Castle that any reference is made

to this habit of its ruler. In Robert de Borron's *Joseph* the title was conferred on Brons because he caught the fish which was placed on the Grail table, and which seems to have been connected with the Grail in distinguishing the righteous from the sinners. In the *Grand St. Graal* also the title arises from the catching of a fish; but in this case the fish becomes the means of feeding a multitude.

The Fisher King bears different names in the different romances, or is unnamed. In the romances which contain the most strongly-marked ecclesiastical features the Fisher King, as such, is not brought into special prominence; in others he is represented as infirm; he has been wounded; his cure is connected with the quest of the Grail and the asking of a question by the Grail Winner; and in some instances the effect of asking this question is to heal the land as well as the King. He inhabits a castle which is remote and difficult of access, and of a mysterious character; and he is the central figure in a sort of ritual whose significance is not explained. He is a relative of the Grail Winner,—in the earliest form, his uncle. In some of the romances there is another person of high rank closely associated with him at the Grail Castle; in Chrétien it is the Fisher

King's father, and in Wolfram the Fisher King's grandfather—the first King of the Grail; and in both these cases the person thus indicated is kept alive by the power of the Grail. In one of the stories he is credited with the ability to change his shape at will. The references to the Fisher King are puzzling and it is difficult to form a satisfactory idea about his real personality or its significance.

This brief statement will serve to outline the problem which the mysterious Fisher King presents; it would be idle to attempt anything more in a brief and informal study like this. Evidently the roots of the problem lie in the more distant past—possibly in some literary works not yet discovered. The early Christian use of a fish as the symbol of Christ has been referred to in our discussion of the *Queste* romance; and the explanation therein given for the title of the Fisher King as well as the placing of the fish and the Grail side by side on the table, show the connection with Christian symbolism which was in that author's mind, although, apparently, in a somewhat distorted state. On the other hand, a connection has been traced with Celtic mythology—the fish being considered as corresponding to the Salmon of Wisdom which appears in some

early Irish tales. Other scholars see in the Fisher King, and the rites in which he participates, a development from the mysteries which were practiced as rites of certain religions of the ancient world.¹ The whole problem is of the greatest difficulty, closely related to the intricate questions which are suggested by a study of the origin of the Holy Grail itself.

Brief mention has already been made of the puzzling differences between the references to the Grail in the various texts. In the earliest of those which are known to us, the Grail is (to repeat the statement in Chapter III), a vessel of wonderful workmanship, shedding a brilliant light, used in a ceremonial celebration not explained, connected in a mysterious way with the health of the Fisher King, and having a holy character. It is, however, only a "graal" or dish. In other romances it is the vessel into which our Lord's blood was received—either while his body was on the Cross, or when removed therefrom. In some cases it is identical with the Cup or the Dish used at the Last Supper; in yet other cases, while the identification with the Passion relic is not men-

¹ A condensed statement, with conclusions drawn therefrom, will be found in *The Fisher King in the Grail Romances*, by Wm. A. Nitze, in Publications of the Modern Language Association of America, Sept., 1909.

tioned, the Grail appears as the central feature of a ritualistic ceremony similar to that which was described by Chrétien. In Borron's *Joseph* the Grail seems to be an important feature of the procedure whereby Joseph of Arimathea obtains the guidance of the Holy Spirit; and, when it is placed on the square table which he made, it seems to influence the separation of the righteous from the sinners and to bring a blessing upon the former. In some of the romances it is represented as having the power of supplying food. In sustaining Joseph's life while he was in prison, it may be regarded as exerting a *spiritual* power; but elsewhere it is clearly represented as providing natural food. This power is not confined to the feast at the Grail Castle but is manifested also for the benefit of the Knights of the Round Table at Camelot (see the *Queste*). In some cases it has the power of entering a room without human assistance, and of passing by itself from one place to another; in others it heals the sick or sustains life. In some of the ecclesiastical romances, the Grail is used in the celebration of the Mass. One writer (Wauchier) brings two seekers to the Grail Castle; one of them sees the Grail only as a provider of food, while the other sees the Grail procession and is moved to ask about its mysteries.

We should also note the unique conception of Wolfram in representing the Grail as a stone which has the power of providing food and of conveying the gift of perpetual youth. The conception is not entirely a secular one, since the stone is said to have been brought from Heaven by angels and to receive its power by an annual visit of a Dove which comes from Heaven on every Good Friday; but there is no indication here of any idea of treating the Grail as a relic of the Passion. Wolfram's reference to the mysterious writings on the Grail whereby its Knights are sent on errands of mercy to distant lands, is considered as an interpolation—not comprised in his original. It will be readily seen that the material which is available for studying the problem of the origin and the significance of the Holy Grail is extremely complicated. A further discussion of the problem will be found in Chapter XII.

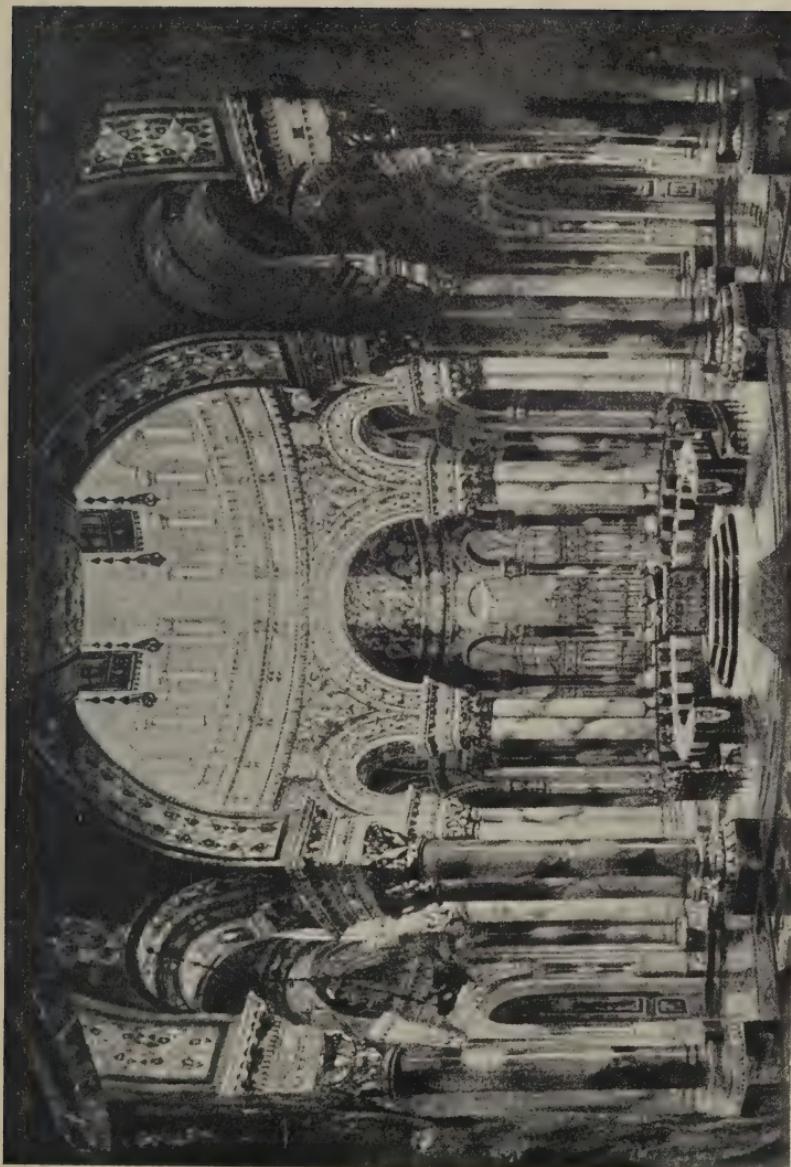
The reader will have noticed already that there are three Grail-Seekers—Perceval, Gawain and Galahad; that these three are distinct persons—each on his own quest; and that their visits to the Grail Castle are not variations of the same incident. In fact, as has been stated elsewhere, in one of the romances two of the seekers visit the castle on different occasions, and see different

things there! In the work which gives us the earliest known mention of the Grail, Perceval is the Grail-Seeker; and in the continuation of that work which relates that Gawain also visited the Grail Castle (apparently before Perceval) it is nevertheless Perceval who sees the Grail procession, and becomes Lord of the castle! It should be noted further that in two of the romances (*Perlesvaus* and *Diu Krone*) Gawain visits the Grail Castle but finds that Perceval had already been there. Galahad, although brought into prominence in modern Grail literature, appears as the Grail Knight only in the *Queste* and in a closely-related work known as the *Demanda*, with brief mention in the *Grand St. Graal*. Unless unquestioned evidence to the contrary is discovered, we may fairly acknowledge the preeminence of Perceval as the Grail Knight, while nevertheless admitting that the existence of three such Knights adds much to the perplexing problems of the Grail literature.

The Bleeding Lance is also one of the puzzling features of this literature. The earliest of these romances mentions it as borne by a youth in the Grail procession, and in advance of the Grail itself; and Gawain entered upon a quest to find it. Neither here nor in Wolfram's *Parzival* is it

Pach Bros.

THE PALACE OF THE HOLY GRAIL
(Reproduced from scene-painter's model)



specified as a relic of the Passion. Some of the romances on the other hand allude to it as the spear or lance of Longis which pierced the Saviour's side. In the *Queste* it seems to be used at the celebration of the Sacrament.

According to the early Christian legend, the soldier who pierced our Lord's side was blind; the blood ran down his spear and reached his hand; and his sight was restored when he raised his hand to his eyes and touched them with it. As early as the fourth century the name Longinus was given to this soldier and also to the centurion who watched the body of Christ.

The presence of the Lance in the Grail romances has given rise to wide differences of opinion. Some writers have maintained that it was originally a Celtic talisman which, in course of time, became Christianized. Others consider that the many references to the Lance as a relic of the Crucifixion in these romances can be best explained by direct derivation from Christian origin. Some interesting facts tending to support the latter view are given below.

In the contemporary chronicles of the First Crusade it is related that after the capture of Antioch by the Crusaders on their way to Jerusalem, they were besieged in that city by the

Turks. It is stated that St. Andrew revealed himself to one of the pilgrims, Peter by name, and gave him certain knowledge which led some of the Crusaders to dig deeply into the ground at the Church of St. Peter, with the result that the Lance of the Crucifixion was found. Carrying this sacred relic they repulsed the Turks. Later, as there had been some doubts expressed as to the genuineness of the relic, Peter undertook to go through fire with the Lance in his hand; and he passed through this ordeal unharmed. Soon after this, and with the relic in their possession, the Crusaders attacked Jerusalem, and recovered the Holy City from the hands of their enemies, thus fulfilling the great object of the Crusade.

The final fate of the relic is obscure, but it is stated that Raymond (one of the leaders of the Crusade, who was present when the Lance was found) took it to Constantinople. Various stories were current in the Middle Ages about its later history.

We need not discuss here the historical accuracy of this account of the discovery of the Lance, beyond noting that it is not found in a romance, but is a part of the chronicles of those wonderful years, written at the time by persons who took part in the events related. Our present interest

lies in the fact that the discovery of the Lance, and its subsequent wanderings, took place at a time which was not long before its appearance in the Grail romances. The fall of Jerusalem occurred in 1099, and we find an apparently sacred Lance in a Grail story whose author died in or about the year 1191. It is not here particularly specified as the relic of the Crucifixion, but it is carried in a solemn procession in connection with another object of a holy character—a procession which gives the impression of mysterious sanctity. Moreover, two of the continuators of this romance refer to the Lance as being the one with which our Lord's side was pierced; and this same identification is found in other writers of the Grail romances. The fact that neither Chrétien nor Wolfram refer to the Lance in this way is not necessarily an argument for its non-Christian origin. Chrétien it will be noted, leaves the Grail, also, without any comment on its origin or meaning.¹

It is reasonable to conclude, therefore, that at

¹ Interesting discussions of the Lance will be found in *The Legend of Longinus* by Rose Jeffries Peebles, Bryn Mawr College Monograph Series, vol. ix; and in *The Bleeding Lance* by Arthur C. L. Brown. Publications of the Modern Language Association of America, March, 1910. See also *The First Crusade* by August C. Krey, Princeton University Press, 1921.

the time when the romances were written which deal with the mysterious vessel so often regarded as a relic of the Crucifixion, there should also be introduced this other relic which had been, only a short time before, a subject of so much attention.

An important point in the critical consideration of the Lance in the Grail romances is, that it—as well as the Grail—is, according to some of the writers, the object of a quest. In our comment on Chrétien's *Perceval* in Chapter III it has been noted that Gawain was engaged in such a quest; and there seems to be some basis for holding that Gawain (who appears to be connected with a line of tradition independent of the Grail) may have been already known in current traditions as a seeker of the Lance—the two legends being combined by Chrétien or an earlier writer.

Whether the quest of the Lance did or did not antedate the quest of the Grail as a separate subject for treatment in literature (as has been suggested), is a question for critical investigation too extensive for consideration here.¹ It is

¹ The following quotation is interesting and suggestive:

"It is curious also that in the three versions of the story most closely agreeing, the *Conte del Graal*; *Parzival* and *Peregrine*, we find the bleeding lance and the sword in each, while for the Grail talisman we have variously, an enigmatic object of gold set with precious stones, a stone and a bleeding head on a dish; this vari-

enough to note that the references to the quest of the Lance, so curiously interwoven with the quest of the Grail, may be explained by the widely spread interest in the Crucifixion relics and the legends pertaining to them.

In connection with this discussion it should be noted that the Lance was, from an early date, a feature in the Mass of the Eastern Church, being thrust into the wafer in the course of the celebration. (See also Chapter XII.)

It is also evident that there is some special significance attached to the Swords which are mentioned in the Grail romances, but this significance is not clearly understood. When Perceval made his first visit to the Grail Castle he received a present of a sword which would break only in one peril known to no one but its maker. At his second visit, as related by Wauchier, a sword broken into two pieces lay on the bier, and he was able to weld the two pieces together, but not completely. Manessier states that Tribuet, who had forged the sword, finished the incomplete

ation seems to point to the conclusion that the lance and sword and not the Grail, were the original features of the story; and accordingly we find in *Chrétien* that it is the lance, and not the Grail, which Gawain goes to seek; and the lance is also treated at greater length than is the Grail." *Parzival*, translated by Jessie L. Weston, vol. ii, p. 193.

welding which Perceval had effected; and he further states that the sword was the cause of the Fisher King's wound. Gerbert alludes to the mending of Perceval's sword at the forge, but he states that Perceval himself broke his sword by knocking it against the door of a castle which he visited. Later he relates the incident of Perceval's joining a broken sword at the Grail castle. Wau-chier alludes to the mending of a broken sword at the Grail Castle, as mentioned above, but he connects the incident with the visit of Gawain as well as with that of Perceval. In the *Queste* the Grail hero, who is here Galahad, fulfills a test of his fitness by withdrawing a sword which was imbedded in a block of marble—an incident which recalls Arthur's similar act of prowess as related in the *Merlin*. In mediæval romances one need not be surprised to meet references to swords distinguished by their strength or beauty or by other special characteristics, perhaps of a marvelous character—such as the sword Excalibur which King Arthur obtained so mysteriously from the fairy in the lake,¹ but the curious and varying references to swords in the Grail stories, and particularly to a *broken* sword, are among the puzzles of these romances.

¹ See the *Suite du Merlin*, discussed in Chapter IX.

The engrafting of the Merlin legend upon that of the Grail has been mentioned previously; and one of its interesting features is the fact that Merlin has knowledge of the Grail mysteries, and on occasion makes known his knowledge to others. This seems to be only the result of a play of the imagination on the part of the writers, but it is worth noting in view of a possible importance which might develop in the critical study of these legends.

We should not close this brief review without alluding once more to the fact that one of these romances, evidently the product of a master hand—Wolfram's *Parzival*—is very different from all the others in its conception of the Grail, in its omission of many of the important features of the other romances, and in the source from which it claims to have been drawn.

The various problems connected with the Grail romances alluded to above, are merely stated here in outline, for the purpose of enabling the reader to comprehend better the material on which these studies are based. No attempt is made here to examine all the problems in detail, since this should be made as a special study and would be beyond the scope of the present work.

CHAPTER XI

GLASTONBURY AND FÉCAMP

THERE are two localities which are of great interest in connection with the story of the origin and development of these legends; and we will do well to make them the subject of some investigation; viz., Glastonbury in Somerset, and Fécamp on the coast of Normandy.

According to an ancient tradition, Glastonbury was the site of the earliest Christian church in Great Britain, founded by Joseph of Arimathea, who, according to the *Grand Saint Graal* romance, brought the Holy Grail to Great Britain. William of Malmesbury, writing in the first half of the twelfth century, refers in his *De Antiquitate Glastoniensis Ecclesiae* to an ancient chronicle as authority for the statement that Joseph of Arimathea with twelve companions came to England as missionaries, and built a church at a place called *Inisgutrin* (isle of glass) by the Britons; and that the Angles, after their conquest of the land, rendered the name in their language as

Glastynbury. The ancient description of the place as an island appears to have arisen from the fact that in the olden time the site was surrounded by marshes. It has been held that the text of *De Antiquitate* contains many interpolations and that the genuineness of this and other passages is open to grave doubts, especially as other early historians make no reference to the statement mentioned.¹ William's work also contains other derivations of the name Glastynbury; this seems to support the theory that his original text may have suffered through interpolations. Whatever may be the truth about the interpolations, the writing referred to above has been widely accepted as authority for the Glastonbury tradition. The church and abbey certainly existed at a very early date, and underwent many vicissitudes in the times of the Danes and the Normans. Local struggles for supremacy brought the monks of Glastonbury into disputes with neighboring ecclesiastical authorities, and it is held that the fabrication of documents relating to the history and importance of the Glastonbury foundation was resorted to on a large scale, in order to add to its prestige; so that full credence cannot always be

¹ Cf. *William of Malmesbury*, etc., by W. W. Newell in Publications of Modern Language Association, vol. xviii (1903).

given to the claims which were made in its behalf. Many relics were gathered there, including the body of Joseph of Arimathea; and the place became a great resort for pilgrims. At the time when William of Malmesbury wrote, there was an old wooden church with relics—St. Mary's—and a larger stone church dedicated to Saint Peter and Saint Paul; also, on a neighboring hill called the Tor, a church dedicated to St. Michael. After an extensive fire in 1184, a new church of St. Mary was built as a lady chapel to a large church, and dedicated in 1186.

Giraldus Cambrensis, who lived at the end of the twelfth century and the beginning of the thirteenth century, states that in his time the bodies of King Arthur and Queen Guinevere were exhumed at Glastonbury. This appears to have occurred in or about the year 1191.

Another tradition in regard to Glastonbury is found in the *Life of St. Gildas*, dating from about this same period. Here it is related that Melwas, or Melvas, or Maelwas, King of Somerset, abducted Guinevere and carried her to his city of Glastonbury, *i.e.*, the "City of Glass" (*Glastonia id est urbs vitrea*). This Melwas, although here represented as an earthly King, was originally a character in Celtic mythology; his kingdom was

the Isle of Glass in the Otherworld—the Isle of Avalon of Celtic mythology. William of Malmesbury had already stated that the King and Queen had been buried at Glastonbury according to local tradition, and the identifying inscription is said to have referred to the place of burial as the “Isle of Avallonia.”

Leaving aside a more detailed consideration of the different theories for the origin of the name of Glastonbury or the reason why it was referred to as the Isle of Avallonia, we can accept the fact that the place was at an early date brought into close connection with the story of Joseph of Arimathea, and, later, with the careers of King Arthur and Queen Guinevere, and that it was identified with the Avalon of Celtic mythology, *i.e.*, the Otherworld.

From very early times there had existed among the Celts the belief in a Happy Otherworld—in one sense the abode of the dead, and yet also considered as a place to which mortals might go without dying, but from which they could not return alive to earth. The conception was not clearly fixed; there were many variations. One of them made it a Land of Women. It was always a place where heat and cold and illness and fatigue were unknown. The measure of time disappeared

there. It was represented as an island lying in the distant sea, towards the West. It was sometimes called the Isle of Glass.

As far back as the seventh or eighth century this idea was shown in the ancient Irish tale *The Voyage of Bran son of Febal* who was tempted by a strange woman to make a voyage over the seas to a distant island, the Land of Women, where there was no sickness, no unhappiness, no death. Bran stayed there for a period which seemed to be a year, but was really many years. In this case the visitor was enabled to return, but after he told of his adventures nothing more is known of him.¹

A search for the antecedents of the idea of the Happy Otherworld would take us beyond the scope of our present subject; and the development of the idea in mediæval times would of itself prove to be a subject of wide extent and great intricacy. For our present purpose it is sufficient to note the fact that there are many allusions to this Happy Otherworld in the Arthurian romances. Some of these show a more or less clear connection with Glastonbury. Chrétien's *Érec et Énide*, the earliest known of all the Arthurian romances, speaks

¹ Cf. *The Voyage of Bran*, by A. Nutt, London, Grimm's Library, vols. iv and vi.

of it as the *Isle de Voirre* (isle of glass) over which Maheloas reigned. It was a place where heat, and cold, and tempest were unknown. The same author's *Lancelot* (called also *Le Conte de la Charette* or *Le Chevalier de la Charette*) tells of the rescue, at the hands of Lancelot, of Queen Guinevere, who had been abducted by Méléagant, son of King Bademagu of the land of Gorre whose chief city was Bade (Bath, in Somerset). Méléagant carried her to his country which is described as difficult of access, whence return was reported to be impossible. The similar incident in the *Life of St. Gildas*, mentioned above, gives the abductor's name as Melwas, and the place of imprisonment as the City of Glass. All these rulers, Maheloas, Méléagant, and Melwas, are held to indicate the same character, *i.e.*, the King, or Prince, of the Dead.¹

Other allusions in the romances deal with the mystery and enchantment of the Otherworld without connecting it with any particular locality.

Chrétien tells of Gawain's visit to an enchanted castle in a land whence people could not return, and where he was told that he must remain; but he broke the spell and was able to proceed. Wolf-

¹ Cf. *Melwas Roi des Morts*, article by Ford. Lot in *Romania*, vol. xxiv.

ram related a similar incident at the Castle of Marvels built by the magician Klingsor, wherein were imprisoned numerous beautiful maidens. In the romance *Diu Krone* Gawain visits Meide-lan, an isle of women. There are also instances in other stories, not mentioned in these pages, where Gawain is represented as visiting Fairyland. In the *Lanzelet* it is related that the infant Lancelot was carried away by a fairy queen to her kingdom of Meide-lant which was inhabited only by women; and there the boy was kept until he was fifteen years old. The *Prose Lancelot* includes practically the same incident, the fairy being named Viviane, The Lady of the Lake. The conception of the Otherworld was an unfailing source of material for the embellishment of these romances.

It is quite possible that the identification of Glastonbury with Avalon may have been due to the inventions of the monks, who, familiar with the Arthurian material, desired thus to glorify their place of residence. This result might have been reached by making interpolations in the work of William of Malmesbury (as mentioned above), or by inventing the story of the exhumation of the bodies of Arthur and Guinevere. A widely current belief existed that Arthur was not

really dead. Geoffrey of Monmouth had stated that the great king had been taken mortally wounded to the island of Avalon to be healed. Wace, in his chronicle, repeated this statement, and also referred to the expectation that Arthur would return in course of time. Layamon stated that in Avalon he would be in the care of Argante¹ the Queen of Elves, and that he would be healed and would again come to his kingdom. Among the romances, as well as among the chronicles, we find some references of a similar character. The *Didot Perceval* leaves Arthur wounded at Avalon. The French *Mort Artu* relates that the king was carried away in a boat filled with women headed by Morgain la Fée, but does not mention Avalon. The English *Morte Arthure* (of later date but deriving from an early French original) says he went to Avalon to be healed; and it states that he was buried at Glastonbury. Finally, the *Perlesvaus* alludes to Guinevere's tomb at Avalon;

¹ Argante-Morgana-Morgain la Fée, "the Fairy Queen of Arthurian legend;" see Miss Lucy Allen Paton's *Studies on the Fairy Mythology of Arthurian Romances*, Radcliffe College Monograph 13. Miss Paton discusses Morgain, the Lady of the Lake, and Niniane (Viviane). Morgain is the only one of the three who is found in other than Arthurian literature. The Lady of the Lake and Niniane are sometimes confused. Miss Paton holds that the three fairies do not represent the same mythical conception, but that they were originally three distinct beings.

and the author states that the Latin original of his text was found in a holy house of religion in the island of Avalon. There is evidence to indicate that the monastery at Glastonbury was here referred to.¹

But the special interest of Glastonbury is not alone in its identification with Avalon. The reputed visit of Joseph of Arimathea with his disciples, and the presence of his body there in company with other sacred relics, are important features in the record of that ancient abbey. Whatever may be our opinion of the historical accuracy of the claim for the personal presence of Joseph there, and the construction of the church, we can at least find some foundation for the belief that his body may have been brought there in the course of time. The *Chronicles of Senones* (Sens), dating from the early part of the thirteenth century, relate that Fortunat, patriarch of Grado, having made a pilgrimage to the East, was compelled to take refuge at the monastery of Moyenmoutier in the Vosges Mountains, and that he received a warm welcome there on account of the relics which he brought from the Holy Land, including the body of Joseph of Arimathea.

¹ Cf. *Glastonbury the Holy Grail*, article by W. A. Nitze in *Modern Philology*, Vol. 1.

At a later time the body of Joseph was taken away by "strange monks." The visit of Fortunat was in the time of Charlemagne; and the writer of these *Chronicles* (Richer) states that the removal of Joseph's body appears to have taken place before the end of the tenth century. There does not seem to be any direct evidence that the relic was then taken to Glastonbury, but the reference to the "strange monks" and the persistence of the Glastonbury tradition, are considered to give some ground for believing that this was the case.¹

In connection with Joseph's visit to Great Britain it is related that his staff was planted and grew into the holy thorn bush on a hill near Glastonbury, and that he brought with him the blood which was taken from the Saviour's wounds. The latter one of these incidents necessitates reference to the Abbey at Fécamp, with which the legend of the Holy Blood is closely associated.² This legend may be briefly told as follows:

When the Saviour's body was removed from the Cross by Joseph and Nicodemus, they scraped with a knife the blood which had dried on the

¹ Cf. *Le Saint Graal*, article by P. Paris in *Romania*, vol. i.

² Cf. *Essai sur l'abbaye de Fécamp*, by Le Roux de Lincy, Rouen, 1840.

wounds. At the death of Nicodemus he gave the blood to his nephew Isaac for safe-keeping. Isaac's wife was a Jewess; and, seeing her husband performing his devotions before his precious possession, she accused him of idolatry. Removing from Jerusalem to Sidon on this account, he learned there in a vision that Jerusalem would soon be destroyed; so he took two tubes of lead and placed therein the blood and the knife, and concealed them in the trunk of a fig-tree. The fissure in the tree closed up as by a miracle. Later, he was led by God to cut down the tree and cast it into the sea, and it was carried by God's care to the neighborhood of Fécamp on the northern coast of France. Here three saplings sprouted which were transplanted by a holy man living in the vicinity, but the trunk itself could not be moved. Later, an angel, disguised as a pilgrim, removed the trunk to another spot, where, at a time which appears to have been about the beginning of the sixth century, it manifested a miraculous power. A white stag, hunted by hounds, stood at bay by this tree-trunk, and neither the hounds nor the horses of the hunters would come near. The chief hunter, Duke Anségis, greatly astonished, prayed to God for an explanation of this wonder, and was led to

erect a chapel on that spot. Years afterward, about 662, a new church and abbey were erected by St. Wanninge (Waninges), to whom the story of the tree was revealed in a vision. The buildings were destroyed in one of the invasions of the Northmen, but they were rebuilt by William, son of Rollo, Duke of Normandy. William's son, Richard I, again rebuilt the church on a greater scale towards the end of the tenth century, and re-established the monastic discipline which had become demoralized. Having examined the archives of the abbey, he found there the tale of miracles which had been wrought by the Holy Blood. He discovered the trunk of the fig-tree, placed it in the wall of the church, and deposited the relic itself under a pillar near the altar. The chalice and paten in which the elements had been placed were taken to Fécamp. In the year 1171 Henry de Sully, fifth abbot of Fécamp, took all the holy relics from their hiding places and placed them on the altar.

It would be futile to attempt to draw the line between history and legend in the account of the many miracles which are recorded in connection with the relic; but there appears to be no doubt that the Holy Blood was a well-known relic at the abbey in the early part of the twelfth century,

and that traditions about its early miraculous history were then in existence. The monastery flourished under Richard's successors, and was well-known throughout Europe.

In Wauchier's continuation of Chrétien's *Perceval*, where the visit of Perceval to Mont Dolorous is related, there is in several of the manuscripts a passage in which Wauchier refers for his authority to a tale which existed in writing at Fécamp. This may be only one of those mysterious references to unknown sources which are so common in these mediæval writings, and which do not commend themselves to critical judgment in respect to their genuineness. On the other hand, this passage may be a trustworthy indication of the existence at that time of some literary work whose value would now be beyond measure. If the latter is the case, the fact that it is mentioned in a Grail story as corroborating that narrative seems to indicate that the Fécamp document dealt with this legend; and it needs no stretch of imagination to see that at the place where the legend of the Holy Blood had long been particularly located, there might be a special interest in the legend of the vessel in which the blood had been contained; and the surroundings would be favorable for the consideration and development of this latter legend.

CHAPTER XII

THEORIES OF ORIGIN

THE early references to Arthur have been discussed in Chapter II. They do not furnish us with convincing evidence that he was a historical character. Geoffrey's *History* was widely accepted as genuine in his time; but, as already stated, there were, on the other hand, even at that period some expressions of distrust regarding it. The work plainly shows mythical elements which weaken its value as a historical document, and, consequently, its value as a witness of Arthur's existence.

We need not attempt here a detailed discussion of the many questions which arise over the strange mixture of history and legend which serves as a setting for the early accounts of the exploits of King Arthur. There is, in fact, no proof that he was a king. Even granting his historical existence, he may quite as probably have been a valiant warrior, developing later into the romantic monarch so familiar to modern readers.

It has even been held that Arthur was originally a Celtic god; or that there was a god who became identified with a mortal ruler of the name of Arthur, so that to the latter may have been attributed in his own or later time certain qualities belonging to a Celtic divinity. One theory is that he may have been originally an agricultural deity, and that the Round Table itself was an agricultural festival celebrated by a heathen ceremonial—with an implication that the Grail itself was of like origin.¹

The study of Arthurian geography has shown how widely extended is the association of the traditions about King Arthur with various localities in Great Britain. In some degree this exists, of course, in Brittany; but it is mainly in England and Scotland. Two general theories prevail. One of these theories places the original Arthur-land in Northern England and Southern Scotland; another places it in Cornwall and Southern Wales. Whichever is correct as regards the place of origin of these traditions, there was probably an accretion of local traditions belonging to other localities in the formation of the Arthurian story. These widespread associations of localities with

¹ Cf. *The Round Table*, by Lewis A. Mott, in Publications of the Modern Language Association, vol. xx, 1905.

traditions, while not conclusive as historical proofs, nevertheless seem to point to something more than legend as their basis.

Without further reference to the question of the historical basis of the Arthurian traditions, we need only emphasize here the wonderful development of the theme in the romances of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, in which we find the picturesque accounts of the King's court and of the association of the Knights of the Round Table; and in addition we note the blending of the Arthurian traditions with those which clustered around the story of the Holy Grail. In the romances which treat especially of Arthur's court, the exploits of the Knights of the Round Table are, generally speaking, of greater importance than the exploits of King Arthur himself; and the quest of the Grail by the different knights is an incident of major importance. Whence did this feature come, and what did it mean?

In seeking the origin of the legend of the Holy Grail, and endeavoring to arrive at an understanding of the mysterious features which it presents, we find three main theories which claim consideration. These may be briefly described as follows: (a) the theory of Celtic origin, (b) the theory

which points to an ultimate derivation from the ritual of worship of a god of vegetation, and (c) the theory of Christian origin, centering around the identification of the Grail with a vessel of the Holy Supper.¹

A strong upholder of the Celtic theory was the late Mr. Alfred Nutt, who wrote with authority on the subject of these legends; and his argument will serve well as a general statement of this theory. Mr. Nutt emphasized the clearly marked distinction between the two parts into which this literature may be divided—i.e., the account of the origin and wanderings of the Grail, which he called the *Early History*, and the account of the adventures of those who sought to find it, which

¹ The literature treating of these theories is of very wide extent. Various phases of the discussion available to English readers may be found in the following works: *Studies on the Legend of the Holy Grail*, by Alfred Nutt; *The Legend of Sir Perceval*, vols. i and ii, and *The Quest of the Holy Grail*, by Jessie L. Weston, as well as the same author's article *The Grail, and the Rites of Adonis* in *Folk Lore* for 1907; *Adonis Attis Osiris*, by J. G. Frazer; *The Fisher King in the Grail Romances*, by W. A. Nitze, and *The Bleeding Lance*, by Arthur C. L. Brown, in the publications of the Modern Language Association of America for 1909 and 1910 respectively, as well as a review of Prof. Brown's article by Gertrude Schoepperle in the volume of these publications for 1910; *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*, by G. R. S. Mead; *The Legend of Longinus*, by Rose Jefferies Peebles, Bryn Mawr College Monograph No. IX. In using this and other material for the preparation of the present résumé it has not been thought necessary to give specific reference for each statement.

he called the *Quest*. The *Joseph* of Robert de Borron and the *Grand St. Graal* treat of the *Early History*. Mr. Nutt considered that the material covered by the *Quest* was without doubt originally independent of and older than the *Early History*, and he inferred therefore that the Grail cannot be regarded as having its origin only in Christian legend. He therefore sought for such evidences in regard to its origin as might be shown by an examination of the literature describing the *Quest*, and he found that this showed so many parallels with Celtic traditions that he concluded we should look to these latter for the source of many features of the Grail story as well as of the Grail itself. We shall not attempt to review here the details of this examination; a brief statement will be sufficient.

The beginning of the story of Perceval is in some respects paralleled by the prose opening of an ancient poem, still known in the Highlands, entitled *Laoith an Amadain Mhoir*, *The Lay of the Great Fool*, which tells of a lad, born after his father's death, who was brought up in the forest. He had marvelous strength, caught three deer and a wild horse, and was clothed in a dress made of deer's skin. He was called the Great Fool. He went to the court of the King, who was his

uncle, and spoke curtly to him. The Great Fool Tale is one of the variants of a folk-tale existing in the literature of many peoples. Other variants have been noted without going outside of the literature of the Celts. This particular tale, although not including many similarities of incidents with the story of Perceval, nevertheless shows a close correspondence therewith. If this Lay were surely anterior to the Perceval story, the resemblance might be taken as one of the indications of a close relation between the latter and the folk-lore of the Celts; but more recent opinion assigns the Lay to a later date. Therefore the strength of Mr. Nutt's argument depends more upon the considerations indicated in the paragraphs which follow.

Following this line of investigation to discover closer analogies with the Grail story, the suggestion is made that the magic balm which would bring the dead to life, mentioned by Gerbert as carried by the hideous old woman, seems to have a counterpart in another Highland tale, *The Knight of the Red Shield*, in which a witch-like woman is possessed of a vessel containing a balm which heals; and in another tale the woman's balm restores the dead to life. Moreover, in early Celtic literature there are instances of cauldrons

which had the power of always satisfying those whom they served with food. An illustration of this is the cauldron of the Dagda which was one of the treasures¹ of the Tuatha de Danaan, the mysterious superhuman beings of ancient Celtic mythology. This cauldron possessed the same property as is indicated above.² Also, in early Welsh literature there is the cauldron of Bran the Blessed which would restore to life the body of one who was thrown into it, but the man would thereafter remain dumb. It is stated in Manessier's continuation of Chrétien's *Perceval* that the mere presence of an angel bearing the Grail brought healing to Perceval and Hector after their combat.

The puzzling references to swords in the Grail romances have been mentioned in a previous chapter. Mr. Nutt pointed out that swords endowed with supernatural powers are often found in ancient Irish literature and that in some cases a

¹ It should be noted that another of their treasures was a Spear or Lance. Besides the Cauldron and Spear they were said to have brought to Ireland a wonderful Sword and the Stone of Destiny.

² There were many examples of cauldrons of plenty (as well as those with other magic qualities) in early Irish and Welsh literature. For details see *Notes on Cauldrons of Plenty and the Land Beneath the Waves*, by A. C. L. Brown in the *Kittridge Anniversary Papers* (Ginn & Co. 1913) where the theory of Celtic origin is further discussed.

sword is the means of bringing woe into the narrative, and in others it is a test of the hero's fitness for the task which he undertakes.

The visit to a magic or "bespelled" castle is also cited as a suggestive feature in this list of parallels with Celtic literature and folk-lore. At the Grail castle the visitor was expected to ask a question; and, if he did so, the spell which rested on the inhabitants, or on the land itself, would be removed. At the Maiden's Castle, as described by Wauchier, the cordiality of the visitor's reception depended on his striking a table with a hammer which was attached to it by a chain. This latter castle, which was inhabited only by women, and which disappeared while Perceval slept, had the same characteristics of the Celtic Otherworld as the Castle of Marvels mentioned in one of the romances. "Unspelling" stories are of frequent occurrence in Celtic mythology.

A similar parallel with Celtic ideas is suggested as existing in the case of the Fisher King. Discussing the various references to him in connection with the act of fishing, Mr. Nutt suggested that a summarized statement be made to the effect that he "passes his life seeking for a fish, which, when caught, confers upon him the power of distinguishing good from evil, or enables him

to furnish an inexhaustible meal to his men." The correspondence indicated is with the Salmon of wisdom, as mentioned in Chapter X, which appears in the story of Finn MacCumhail. The lad took service under Finn-eges who had for seven years stayed by the river Boyne, hoping to catch the salmon which would enable him to possess all wisdom. The fish was finally caught; and the younger Finn inadvertently touched the roasting salmon with his thumb, put the thumb into his mouth, and thereafter was able to command all knowledge.

The correspondence is also noted between the name Brons, given to the Fisher King, and Bran the Blessed, the owner of the Cauldron of Renovation mentioned in a previous paragraph. The latter was an Otherworld being, while the former, through his custodianship of the Grail, was associated with Glastonbury, the Avalon of Celtic mythology.

Finding therefore many correspondences such as those which have been indicated above, and noting that so many of the incidents of the Grail quest were traceable to Celtic traditions, Mr. Nutt looked upon those traditions as the sources of the Grail legend. The subsequent modifications whereby Christian elements were intro-

duced were described by him as a "Christian transformation of the old Celtic myths and folktales"—in which process the "old mythic vessel of healing, increase and knowledge" was identified with the Cup of the Last Supper; and the other talismans so often associated with the mythic vessel underwent also a similar transformation. To sum up, Mr. Nutt held that "the history of the Legend of the Holy Grail is thus the history of the gradual transformation of old Celtic folktales into a poem charged with Christian symbolism and mysticism.

In such a brief résumé as is given above it is impossible to do justice to the argument, either as representing Mr. Nutt's particular views or as typifying the general attitude of the adherents of the Celtic theory. However, it may serve as an outline to guide the reader in further investigation into this interesting subject.

It may be further noted that, in the examination of the different independent lines of tradition which are woven together to make the story of the Grail quest as known to us, so large a part—for example, those pertaining to Gawain, Tristran and Merlin—is found to be of Celtic, origin. The coincidence, to say the least, is suggestive.

Allusion was made in Chapter III to the curiously abrupt beginning of Chrétien's poem by a reference to "the widow's son," and an intimation was there made that this phrase might give a clue to the origin of the Grail. Prof. W. A. Nitze has called attention to the fact that in certain times and places the system of tracing descent through the mother's line, rather than that of the father, has prevailed and he points out that Perceval's failure when he made his first visit to the Grail castle was due to his neglect of his mother; that after he learned of her death from the hermit he did penance; and that afterwards he made his successful visit to the Grail castle; and that the Fisher King, whom he succeeded as Grail keeper, was his *maternal* uncle, and therefore his closest relative according to the maternal system. In view of the many matriarchal features in the law and literature of the Celts—current in Chrétien's time—the question arises whether this does not give weight to the theory of Celtic origin?"¹

In the various visits of the Grail-seekers to the Grail castle related in the romances we have examined, there is a general correspondence in

¹ Cf. *The Sister's Son and the Conte del Graal*, by W. A. Nitze in *Modern Philology*. Vol. ix, 1912.

some of the features, but noticeable differences in respect to others; and there are very few clues to indicate the real meaning of any of them. In Wauchier's account of Gawain's visit to the castle a prominent and distinctive feature is the body of the dead knight which lay on the bier. Emphasis is laid also on the weeping and lamentation which preceded the feast. The Weeping—usually of women—in connection with references to the Grail and its ceremonies is observed in other tales, but nowhere is it explained by the context. These features are of special interest in view of the theory, previously mentioned, that the material used by Wauchier represents an early stage in the growth and development of the legend, which may derive confirmation from the fact that the Grail is here only a food-provider and has in no degree a sacred or holy character. One of the most interesting theories of the origin of the legend may be discussed from this as a starting point. It is, in brief, that the ceremonies and mysteries of the Grail castle are in some measure related to—or a survival of—a form of worship employing certain rites and ceremonies which originated in classical times, and had a considerable influence on the general trend of thought of the early years of the Christian era.

The rites connected with the worship of Adonis (or Tammuz) Attis, and Osiris, varied in their details as they were celebrated in the various countries around the Eastern Mediterranean but they were practically alike in substance. Their central idea was the celebration of the death and revival of vegetation in the annual processes of nature. Adonis (or Tammuz), for instance, among the Babylonians, Syrians and later the Greeks, embodied the reproductive power of nature; his death was mourned as the death of vegetation, and his restoration to life was hailed with joy as the re-awakening of vegetation in spring-time. On the former of those occasions the rites varied, but they generally included the use of an effigy of the dead god, the public manifestation of mourning (especially by women), and the committal of the body to the waves. A Scriptural reference to this may be found in the book of Ezekiel (Chap. VIII, v. 14) where it is related that the prophet, mourning over the heathen practices of the people, saw women weeping for Tammuz at the north gate of the Temple. The same sort of symbolic representations of Nature's processes was connected with the worship of Attis in Phrygia and Osiris in Egypt—these deities also typifying the god of

vegetation. The rites mentioned were largely of a public character; there were also private ceremonies of a mystic character, including in some cases a sacramental meal and a baptism of blood. These rites were commonly known as Mysteries; and those persons in particular who took part in the private rites must first have passed through some form of initiation before they could receive the secret knowledge which came with full membership. In the early years of the Christian Church there was great activity in religious thought, and a strenuous search for truth. The desire for wisdom was manifested in the schools of the Gnostics, which covered a wide field and were imbued with varying degrees of orthodoxy and heresy. There was a tendency here to perpetuate the Mysteries of classical times in the propagation of the various philosophical and religious tenets. There were political or State mysteries of a public nature; and, besides those, private rites with their initiation ceremonies were resorted to as in the centuries which had preceded. Moreover, as the Mysteries of classical times dealt with the problem of life in vegetation, and as the Gnostic schools were led, naturally, to contemplate the problem of life in all its deeper meanings, there was a direct line of connection

which made easy the continuance of speculative investigations of this nature, with more or less mystic accompaniments, in the centuries which followed.

If now we note the references in some of the Grail romances to the suffering of the Grail-keeper, and his restoration through the asking of a question which has served as a test of the Grail-Seeker, and also to the restoration of fertility to the land, and the relief afforded from the curse which had been laid upon it; and if we remember also the various references to the lamentations at the Grail ceremony (particularly on the part of women) and the curious incident of the dead body on the bier, we cannot fail to observe a very suggestive similarity to the Mysteries and Initiation Ceremonies of distant ages, which are known to have been perpetuated in some degree in much later times. The subject is too large and too intricate to be treated here in detail, and the foregoing presentation of it is undoubtedly incomplete and inadequate; but the reader will see that the theory indicated may explain much that is otherwise hard to understand. Nevertheless, it is of more value in explaining the basis of the Grail ceremonies and mysteries than in furnishing an explanation of the Grail itself. It

is quite possible, however, that in these particular ceremonies there was a plate or vessel commonly used in the ritual; and that an increased importance and wider significance attached themselves to it by reason of a union with other lines of tradition.

The suggestive similarity between the Grail ceremonial and the initiations into the Mysteries of earlier times does not depend on correspondence with the particular rites mentioned above. There were other Mystery-Cults using various rites and ceremonies, but having a common base. The fructification of nature, the annual death and re-birth of vegetation, and, as a natural outcome, the great subject of life itself—all these ideas were fundamental elements of the Cults mentioned. The Initiate had to fulfill certain requirements and submit to certain tests before admission was gained; there was some degree of feasting in connection with the rites; and sacred objects were revealed to him at the culmination of the procedure.

This line of thought may suggest a solution of the problem of the Fisher King. This mysterious person may be in a measure explained by considering him (or his father, as the case may be), as representing the Life-god whose life or health and

death or suffering correspond to the condition of vegetation in the sequence of the seasons. In this view he becomes the central and most important figure in the Grail romances. From this standpoint also, correspondences have been noted between the characteristics of the Fisher King and those of rulers of the Otherworld of Celtic mythology, which brings us by another route to the same conception which was noted in connection with the Celtic theory.

We cannot disregard the fact that there was a long interval between the times when the early Mystery-Cults flourished and the times of the Middle Ages; and that there is no direct connection which can be proved between those ancient rites and the ceremony of the Grail Castle. Nevertheless there may be discerned a connecting thread which should be mentioned here and which is suggested by the mythological Tuatha de Danaan, to whom allusion has been made in discussing the theory of Celtic origin. These mysterious people were originally gods of life and growth and fertility, protectors of vegetation and agricultures; their worship included a ritual which was related to the sequence of the seasons; and they were reported to have originally come from Greece in the far distant past. Strangely enough

we find ourselves again in touch with one theory while considering another.

It is also desirable to note here a curious feature in the myth of Osiris, to the effect that the body of the slain god was placed in a coffer and committed to the Nile; that it drifted to Byblus in Syria and was there cast ashore; and that a tree grew up and enclosed the coffer in its trunk. The coincidence of this story with the legend of the Holy Blood as related in Chapter XI will be recognized at once.

The theory which traces the derivation of the Grail idea to a Christian origin receives some support from the early identification of the mysterious vessel with the Christian relic in the traditions relating to Joseph of Arimathea; but this does not of itself supply a sufficient explanation. It has been suggested that the real source of the legend as it appears in the romances of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries may be found in the ceremonies of the Eastern Church, the impressions they made on the Crusaders, and the ideas thus carried by the latter back to the nations of Western Europe. The Grail procession as related by Chrétien closely parallels the Introit of the Byzantine Mass. The particular features

of the liturgy of the Eastern Church which indicate this parallel, and the points in which that liturgy differs from the liturgy of the Western Church, need not be considered here in detail. The two most important of these are the use of the spear in piercing the bread, and the emphasis laid on the sacredness of the Chalice, or cup, as well as of its contents. It is quite reasonable to suppose that this impressive ceremonial, working on the vivid religious imagination of the beholders, may have been a potent factor in the transmission of the basic idea of the Grail and its ritual to the countries where the romances were written.¹

The Lance at the Grail Castle is a feature which supplies noteworthy reasons in support of the theory of the Christian origin of the Grail. These are set forth in detail in Miss Peebles' monograph mentioned on a previous page. She holds that the absence of identification of the Grail Lance as a Christian relic in the earliest Grail romance—that of Chrétien—as well as in the *Parzival* of Wolfram von Eschenbach, should not

¹ A brief but comprehensive reference to the foregoing points may be found, in connection with a discussion of a related subject, in an article by Prof. P. S. Barto, entitled *Studies in the Tannhäuser Legend* in *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, vol. ix, No. 3, July, 1910.

lead to the assumption that these writers did not regard the Lance in that light. Moreover, the Celtic theory is in her opinion too narrow; marvelous weapons and vessels of plenty are not confined to *Celtic* mythology; the Otherworld idea which has been emphasized as a Celtic feature is only one instance of a tradition widely known to other races. A bleeding lance was a well-known feature of mediæval art, and it also appeared in religious dramas based on the Scriptural story as early as the twelfth century; so it was a familiar idea. Christian tradition can readily explain much that has been considered as proof of Celtic origin. So also with reference to what has been called the "ritual" theory; granting the correspondence between the Grail rites and the mystic religious ceremonies to which they have been likened, there is not sufficient reason for eliminating the influence of the customs and ideas of the early Christian Church as an equal or greater originating cause, especially as the latter were closely related to the early mysteries.

In following out this theory, the widely known legend of Longinus, and the early appearance of a lance or spear in the liturgy of the Eastern Church with its corresponding symbolical meaning, furnish ample reasons for looking to Christian traditions

as the source of the imagery of the Grail rites. The theory has been even carried a step further in the suggestion that the Fisher King may be a symbol of the wounded Christ; the old father may represent Christ in the grave; and Perceval the risen Christ.

Therefore on the theory under present consideration we may conclude that the earliest references to the Grail and its rites were based on conceptions derived from early Christian traditions, and that they did not indicate a confusion of pagan talismans with relics of the Last Supper and the Crucifixion. If on the one hand this conclusion is not open to unquestioned proof, it nevertheless affords quite as reasonable an explanation as any other theory.

There is one other theory about the Grail to which some allusion should be made. For the foundation ideas we must look to the secret information given by the Saviour to Joseph when in prison, to the administration of the Sacrament to Galahad directly from the hands of our Lord, and to the consecration of Josephes as a bishop by the Savior Himself—all of which incidents will be found in some of the various romances heretofore considered. Those incidents will recall to the

reader's mind the strong ecclesiastical tone which has been noted in some of the romances; and although our account of these narratives has been given in a very condensed form, enough has been said to show that if we consider these features as historical rather than romantic, we shall find that an interesting and suggestive field for ecclesiastical discussion is opened before us. The theory is, in brief, that the Grail-Keepers had certain knowledge about the Eucharist and used certain words in connection with it—neither of which were available to other priests; that there was thus instituted “a more secret service than that of the Mass”; that there was an “extra valid consecration” of the elements; and that the Grail-Keepers could lay claim to a “super-apostolical succession.” In a word, the theory maintains the existence of a greater Church within the official Church, viz., The Hidden Church of the Holy Grail.”¹

With the disappearance of the Grail and the cessation of the line of Grail-Keepers, it might be assumed that the Hidden Church had ceased to exist; but as the theory itself springs from a

¹ Cf. *The Hidden Church of the Holy Grail*, by Arthur Edward Waite, London, Rebman Limited, 1909.

mystical turn of mind, it may in like manner be continued by those who, as mystics, see hidden meanings where ordinary people must confess to blindness. If one accepts as historical facts the incidents on which this theory of the Hidden Church is based, it will be easy to believe that, while the outward signs are no longer visible, there may be nevertheless something more in the Eucharistic celebration than is vouchsafed to the ordinary participant or than is explicitly taught by the Church; and from this it is not hard to construct a claim that in a mystical sense the Hidden Church may still exist.

Assuming the Celtic origin of the Grail legend, it has been suggested that the Grail Church corresponded to the Celtic Church as distinguished from the Roman Church, and that the secret words refer to a feature of the consecration of the elements which was not recognized in the Roman rite, but which was borrowed from the Eastern Church and used in the Celtic rite.

Mystical views of the doctrines and ceremonies of the Christian Church have been held at all times in its history, and the atmosphere of the Middle Ages was favorable to them. It is not strange, therefore, that the legend of the Holy Grail should supply material for theories of this

character by those who are versed in mystical studies; but it takes our credulity to regard such a theory as the one mentioned above as having any more than a shadowy claim to our notice.

CHAPTER XIII

MALORY'S MORTE DARTHUR: CONCLUDING NOTES

IN the year 1485 Caxton finished the work of printing at Westminster a book entitled *La Morte Darthur*. In the prologue Caxton stated that many persons of mark had asked him why he had not printed the history of the Holy Grail and of King Arthur, particularly because Arthur had been one of the nine most worthy men who had ever lived. The other eight were Hector of Troy, Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, Joshua, David, Judas Maccabeus, Charlemagne, and Godfrey of Bouillon. King Arthur was emphasized as having a special claim on Caxton's attention as he had been a King of Britain, and was well known throughout the world, and celebrated in many writings—mainly in French and in Welsh. Caxton therefore decided to print a book from a manuscript delivered to him by Sir Thomas Malory, which the latter had compiled out of certain French books, and translated into English. Strange to say, little or nothing

is known about Malory, except Caxton's statements as above, and Malory's own statements that he was a knight, and that he completed his work at a date which was about fifteen years before Caxton printed it.¹

The work in Caxton's edition consisted of twenty-one books comprising about five hundred short chapters. This fact would of itself indicate the desirability of avoiding here any attempt to prepare an abstract of the narrative; but in any case no abstract is required, since the work is a compilation from the histories and romances which we have already discussed. In making his compilation Malory evidently either drew on his own imagination in the treatment of details, or else made use of some romances or revisions of romances which are not now known. The precise source of the various parts of Malory's work need not engage our attention; a discussion of that subject lies outside of our present field. A brief statement explaining the scope of the work will be sufficient.

The story of Arthur's birth as given corresponds generally with Geoffrey's *History* and Borron's

¹ Prof. George Lyman Kittredge identifies him as Sir Thomas Malory of Newbold Revell, who was M. P. for Warwickshire in 1445. Cf. *Harvard Studies in Philology and Literature*, vol. v.

Merlin. His acquisition of the magic sword *Excalibur* from the mysterious arm which came out of the water through the intervention of the Lady of the Lake is told as in the *Suite du Merlin*. Arthur's marriage to Guenever, daughter of King Leodegraunce, follows the same original. Merlin's love for Nimue "one of the damsel's of the lake" is related, as also the former's imprisonment and death. Long sections are given up to the exploits of Launcelot du Lac and Tristram (Tristan) who are called two of the best knights in the world. The romances already mentioned which deal with these characters respectively supply much material, but there are numerous variations therefrom. Launcelot's love for Queen Guenever is a prominent feature. Perceval de Galis, son of King Pellinor, comes as a youth to Arthur's court and is made a knight.

In the course of the narrative Launcelot is brought as a visitor to the court of Pelles. As they sat down to a meal a dove flew in at the window and the room was filled with sweet odors, and the table was furnished with abundant food and drink. A fair damsel entered the room bearing a vessel of gold; and the king knelt in prayer before it, and told Launcelot it was the Holy Grail. The birth of Galahad to Launcelot and Elaine,

daughter of King Pelles, is related; and also his occupation of the Perilous Seat and his consequent acclamation as the knight by whom the Grail shall be achieved. Later, at Camelot, the Grail appeared before the assembled knights, covered with white samite. It moved around without human aid, and brought an abundance of food and drink to the assembly.

Galahad's visit to Corbonek (Corbenic) to see King Pelles is related, and also his mending of the broken sword. The sight of the Grail in its ecclesiastical setting, and the death of Galahad, are described as in the *Queste* romance.

The tale closes with a narrative of the treachery of Mordred, the wounding of Arthur, the final return of the sword *Excalibur* to the lake by Bedivere under Arthur's instructions, and the transportation of Arthur to Avalon for healing in a barge occupied by beautiful women. These women included three queens, Morgan le Fay, the Queen of Northgales, and the Queen of the Waste Lands; and also Nimue the chief lady of the lake.

Malory's work is easily obtainable for reference in one of the various reprints which have been made for modern readers; but the wearisome expansion of unimportant incidents makes it rather dull reading.

Although in modern literature, as in Malory's work and in some of the romances we have examined, the Grail hero is Galahad, the son of Lancelot, nevertheless he is unknown to the earliest Grail romance or to any of its continuations. Perceval (i.e., Parzival according to Wolfram) is the earliest Grail seeker. Gawain also seeks and finds the Grail according to Wauchier; and the account of his visit to the Grail castle has given rise to a theory that it may represent an earlier version, and that Gawain was the original Grail hero; but this theory has not been generally accepted. The substitution of Galahad for Perceval may have been a result of the growing popularity of Lancelot and of a desire to connect him directly with the Grail theme. His unlawful love for Guinevere was an obstacle to his appearance as a finder of the Grail, so he was given a son whose character was without stain. Possibly the author of the *Queste* had in mind that Perceval's character was not without blemish—not suitable for a Grail-Winner.

The home of the Grail is variously placed by different writers—in one case by the border of the sea. According to the German version (Wolfram's *Parzival*) it was the castle of Monsalväsche—this title being apparently the equivalent of Mont

Sauvage, and suggesting the idea of a wild and mountainous situation which is borne out by the context. Wagner follows this idea in his drama *Parzival*. A curious and interesting connection between the legend of the Grail and that which relates to the Venusberg has been suggested; and it merits a brief explanation.¹ References to the mountain of Venus were frequent in the literature of Germany during the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. While in later years many attempts have been made to identify it with some known locality, there was little or no such identification in the early allusions to the mountain. One of those early references is of special interest since it mentions those who seek the "Grail oder Venusberg." An earlier writer speaks of a mountain called "der Gral" whereon a life of sensuality prevails. In that same period the word "Gral" was often used to indicate earthly pleasure. There are also some suggestive passages about King Arthur in the well-known old German poem "*Der Wartburgkrieg*" (thirteenth century). The text is largely occupied with a discussion of riddles; and its exact meaning is hard to discover, but we

¹Cf. *Studies in the Tannhäuser Legend*, by P. S. Barto, in Journal of English and Germanic Philology, vol. ix, No. 3, July, 1910.

can at least say that King Arthur and his knights are represented as living on a mountain with Juno and Felicia under circumstances which indicate luxury, privacy, and absence of earthly troubles. The similarity to the Venusberg is manifest; and on the other hand we note a mention of Lohengrin, and a phrase which seems to allude to the Fisher King. A somewhat similar reference to King Arthur is found in the poem *Diu Krone*, which we mentioned in Chapter IX. Furthermore, in a manuscript of the fifteenth century the writer expresses the opinion that the Swan Knight comes from the mountain where Venus lived "in the Gral."

These instances of a connection between the Grail story and the mountain of Venus seem to indicate a widely-spread popular conception. Briefly stated, the theory is that the demoralization of Arthur and his knights which has been already indicated in one or more of the romances we have considered, became a feature in the German literature of the period which followed the great development of the Grail theme; that the legend of the Venus-berg grew out of the legend of the Holy Grail; and that thus the Gral-berg became in the popular mind the Venus-berg, and the home of the Grail a place of sensual

pleasure. A possible basis for this idea may lie in the circumstances surrounding the wounding of Arthur and his disappearance, viz., that he was carried by fair women to a mysterious place called Avalon which was known to be of a supernatural character, whence he would in time return, as was the case with those who visited Venus in her magical mountain.

From the various chronicles and romances discussed in the preceding chapters the reader can obtain a fairly comprehensive idea of the origin of the Arthurian story and the growth of the Grail and Arthurian themes during the period of their rapid development. The compilation from this material which was made by Sir Thomas Malory was the stepping-stone to the further development in later times. The reader will have already recognized the fact that the most modern form of the Grail story, as shown in Wagner's *Parsifal*, is a wide departure from the original form. There is, of course, abundant material which is available to those who desire to make deeper investigations; our present studies have only dealt with the framework.¹

¹ "Printed on a uniform plan, the Chief Romances of the Round Table would fall little short of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* in size." (*Celtic and Mediæval Romance*, by Alfred Nutt, p. 10.)

A French poet of the twelfth century (Jean Bodel) alluded in one of his works to the three great subjects then engaging the attention of the literary world as *la matière de France*, *la matière de Rome* and *la matière de Bretagne*—meaning respectively the literature relating to Charlemagne and his times, that which dealt with Rome, and that which was concerned with the Arthurian romances. The “Matter of Britain” became a widely accepted title for the general subject of Arthurian material. Writers with Celtic predilections regard this title as applying only to *Great Britain*, in whose traditions they find the origins of these legends; but *Little Britain*, i.e., Brittany, also played an important part in the early development of the Arthurian traditions. Long before the Norman Conquest, the Celtic migration from Great Britain to Brittany had established a close racial connection between the two countries, thus facilitating the transmission to Brittany of the legendary material which the Normans found already existing in Wales.

The origin of the Arthurian material, the relative importance of the British and Continental influences in its development, and the way in which those influences were exerted, are all subjects of great intricacy, regarding which there

are marked differences of opinion among scholars, so that any attempt to formulate conclusions may be eliminated from these studies. It is sufficient here to indicate the opportunities for investigations of great interest which the student of these subjects will find. The close relations between Great Britain and Northern France which were established by the Norman Conquest, the French influences which became thereby so prevalent in England, the work of the story-tellers and minstrels who made popular the legendary material originating in Wales and in the Breton "lais" current in Northern France—all these features are of great importance in the development of the Arthurian tradition.

Before leaving this interesting subject it is desirable to make some reference to the discovery in recent years of an interesting relic which is generally known as The Chalice of Antioch.

In the year 1910 some Arabs, when digging a well at Antioch, found in a subterranean chamber (believed to have been a part of a great church erected there by the Emperor Constantine) a silver cup encased in an elaborately ornamented silver receptacle. It has been the subject of exhaustive study by an archæologist of high

standing—Dr. Gustavus A. Eisen—whose findings are now available in an elaborate de luxe publication in two volumes entitled *The Great Chalice of Antioch*.

The inner cup is rather roughly made, and without decoration. It is of the capacity of about two quarts. The outer shell or receptacle is profusely ornamented by elaborate carvings, whose special feature is a representation of two central figures (one on each side) and ten others with hands outstretched towards the central figure. There are also various Christian symbols, among them a plate containing seven loaves and two fishes, near the right hand of the central personage. The two central figures are identified by Dr. Eisen as representing our Lord—one showing Him as a youth, and one as in His maturity. The other figures are claimed by Dr. Eisen to represent Apostles and Evangelists. The work on all these figures is done with such artistic skill that even the faces are available for careful study.

It is maintained that the receptacle was a work of the first century and that it may be regarded as an almost contemporary likeness of the Savior and His principal followers. Dr. Eisen's conclusions, while not universally accepted, have nevertheless the support of other eminent arch-

æologists; and the conclusions of the author are so carefully and judiciously drawn that they command the most earnest consideration.

If now the outer receptacle is really a Christian relic of the first century, the question naturally arises why this beautiful and elaborate shell was constructed to hold a cup of simple style; and inference is that the inner cup was a relic of a very sacred character. No other explanation would account for the elaborate work on the outer shell so wonderfully executed by an artist of great ability.

The special point of interest in connection with our present investigations lies in the theory that the inner cup may be the cup of the Last Supper—i.e.—the Holy Grail itself. This is not claimed as a fact by the author of the book referred to above; but it is indicated as a strong probability. It is therefore appropriately mentioned at the close of these studies as a matter concerning which the future discussions will be watched with interest.

The survey of the original Grail literature will have shown the reader that there is no single series of incidents forming a clearly defined story, nor any single hero around whom the incidents related

are grouped. The reader will also have noted that the object of the great quest is stated indefinitely and without adequate explanation, and that even the article sought is described differently by different writers, while the narratives of the visits to the Grail Castle show variations in the incidents which took place there. The characters in the romances were generally familiar to the writers of that period. The traditions about King Arthur were widely known; Lancelot and Tristan and Gawain were borrowed from independent tales, and Perceval himself had already appeared in Chrétien's earliest work, *Érec et Énide*. Moreover, many of the incidents in the Grail romances were borrowed from other writings. It is therefore a curious fact that the central point of interest—the Grail itself and the reason for seeking it—should be surrounded by so much uncertainty. One hesitates to conclude that these writers were dealing with a subject which they did not themselves understand—although this has been suggested. As it is evident that there existed some writings about the Grail which have not yet been discovered, we can only hope that further research may throw some light on the problem. For the present, at least, it remains unsolved.

APPENDIX

The following abstracts are given for the benefit of those who desire fuller particulars of the narratives which are briefly noted in the preceding text.

1. Wauchier's Continuation of Perceval,
2. Manessier's Continuation of Perceval
3. Gerbert's Continuation of Perceval
4. Peredur
5. *La Queste del Saint Graal*
6. *Le Grand Saint Graal*
7. Parzival
8. The Prose Lancelot
9. The Didot-Perceval
10. La Suite du Merlin
11. Mort Artu
12. Perlesvaus

(I)

WAUCHIER'S CONTINUATION OF PERCEVAL

The author takes up the narrative where Chrétien leaves it and describes the reunion of Gawain with Arthur's court, a fight with Guiromelans (who was the lover of Clarissans), and the

intervention of Clarissans in the interest of peace. For some distance beyond this point there is considerable confusion in the narrative owing to the variations in the different manuscripts. A tale is inserted about the war of Arthur against Brun de Branlant, and Gawain's love affair with the sister of Brandelis (or Bran de Lis); also a long interpolation about the adventures of Carados, a knight of Arthur's court. Other adventures of Gawain are related, including an expedition of Arthur's knights to rescue Giflet from the Chastel Orgellous, and the capture of its ruler the *Riche Soudoier* after a fight with Gawain who was armed with the sword Excalibur, lent to him by King Arthur; also the stealing of Gawain's son from the castle of Brandelis.

Gawain journeyed through Brittany and Normandy and finally reached a castle by the sea, in one of the rooms of which he saw the body of a knight lying on a bier, and on it was a broken sword. A funeral procession passed, headed by a silver cross, and there was great wailing and lamentation; and afterwards a noble knight, crowned, entered the room. As the company gathered for a meal the Grail served them without assistance, entering and leaving the room by itself. Gawain afterwards saw a lance from which a

stream of blood ran into a silver cup. The King handed to Gawain the other half of the broken sword which was on the bier, and told him to weld the two halves together. Gawain was unable to do this, and the King told him he could not fulfil his quest. Gawain asked about the lance, the sword, and the dead knight on the bier, and was informed that the lance was the one which had pierced the Saviour's side, and that the sword had brought destruction to the kingdom of Logres. Explanations in detail about the mysteries were begun, but Gawain fell asleep, and when he awoke he was on the seashore. As he rode away he saw the country to be in more fertile condition, which the people attributed to Gawain's inquiry about the lance; but they said the condition would have been much more improved if he had asked also about the Grail.

Then follows a long section of the poem in the Mons manuscript relating how Gawain found his son who had been stolen long before, but who had now become a knight. There is also an account of a swan-boat which arrived at Arthur's castle bringing the dead body of King Brangemuir who had reigned over an island where no other human being lived. After this the narrative goes back to Perceval.

Leaving the Hermit's hut, Perceval had a number of adventures, mostly of minor importance. He visited several castles, found a self-playing chess board which checkmated him in a game he undertook to play, killed a white stag to obtain the favors of a water-maiden, fought with the Knight of the Tomb, killed a giant, and fought with a knight until the latter said the "Bretons" called him "*Le Biaus Desconnéus*" (Bel-Inconnu) but that he was the son of Gawain.

Perceval then came unexpectedly to the castle of Biau-Repaire where, although at first unrecognized, he received a warm welcome from Blancheflor; but he remained only three days, and then proceeded on his journeys, saying that he could not marry until his quest was finished. He met a knight *Le Biaus Mauvais*, son of the Count of Gauvoie (Galway) accompanied by a damsels, named Rosete, of hideous ugliness, but dressed richly. He laughed at the damsels and was obliged to fight the knight, and sent them both to King Arthur's court, where, strange to say, the lady was a maiden of great beauty. Perceval then came to his mother's home, found his sister who did not recognize him, made himself known to her and learned that his mother had died some time previously. The two had an affectionate

interview, and Perceval then expressed a desire to go to a neighboring hermitage and visit an uncle on his father's side whom he had not seen since childhood. This was done, and then Perceval took his sister to her home and left again on his wanderings.

He then visited the Maidens' Castle, where after finding difficulty in communicating with the inhabitants he was finally welcomed by the beautiful woman who ruled there, and was charmed by her companions. He learned that no man had any hand in building the castle. He fell asleep and in the morning he found himself in the forest and the castle had disappeared. He fought with a knight, and then met a maiden and a white mule. He joined the maiden and while journeying he saw a great light, which was followed by a storm. Meanwhile, the maiden had disappeared; but the next day she reappeared and told Perceval the light had come from the Grail into which the blood of the King of Kings flowed when He was on the Cross. The Rich Fisher King had it with him in the forest. He carried the Grail with him as a protection against the devil and all temptation. The maiden lent Perceval her mule to guide him to the Rich Fisher's castle. He went on over the bridge of glass, met a knight called Brios de la Forest Arsée, went with him to a

tournament held by Arthur at Chastel Orguellous where Gawain, Saigremor, Garahies, Lancelot and other knights also attended. Perceval proved to be the victor there. He then continued on his way, returned the mule to the maiden in answer to her demand, visited again the Castle of the Chess-board and learned that this curious article had been brought from London by Morghe la fée who was niece, to King Arthur.

The next day Perceval found a knight hanging by his feet from a tree, and released him. The Knight was Bagomedes who had thus suffered at the hands of Kay. Bagomedes followed Kay to Arthur's court and fought him; and then all set out in search of Perceval.

The poem here contains a long section (lines 31520–33754) about certain adventures of Gawain which are not of special importance.

Perceval, after having freed Bagomedes, found a child in a tree and was advised by him to go to Mont Dolorous. Perceval did this, and, by fastening his horse to the magic pillar which was there he proved that he was a most valiant knight. A damsel at the castle told him that she was the daughter of Merlin, who built the castle. Perceval passed on, saw a tree on which many lights were burning, visited a chapel where a

mysterious black hand put out the altar light, and finally arrived at the Grail Castle. The Fisher King gave him a warm welcome. They sat down to meat, and a lovely maiden entered, bearing the "Saint Grael" in her hand, then another with the bleeding lance, and then a youth with a sword broken into two pieces. Perceval asked about the mysteries which he had seen, and received a partial explanation. He then tried to weld together the two pieces of the sword, and practically succeeded, but there remained a small place where the pieces were not completely joined. The King embraced him and made him lord over his house, but told him also that he had not yet finished his task.

(2)

MANESSIER'S CONTINUATION OF PERCEVAL

Wauchier's work left Perceval at the Grail Castle. Manessier tells of the fuller explanation of the mysteries which he received from the King, and mentions a silver dish which was also carried in the procession. Perceval was informed that the lance was the one with which Longis had pierced the Saviour's side; also, that the Grail was the vessel into which ran the Saviour's blood. Joseph had come to Great Britain when he was delivered from prison by Vespasian, and the Grail had also

been brought there. Joseph had helped King Evelac at the city of Sarras and had baptized him and given him the name of Noodrans. The present King of the Grail Castle was a descendant of Joseph and had inherited the care of the Grail. The maiden who bore the Grail was the King's daughter; and the one who bore the silver dish was the daughter of King Goon Desert, the brother of the Grail-King. The broken sword which Perceval had joined together was the one with which Goon Desert had been killed, and which broke at that time. The Fisher King, in handling the fragments, had been wounded in the thigh and could not be healed until Goon Desert's death had been avenged.

Then follow a number of adventures experienced by Perceval, and also a section about Gawain. Perceval visited Tribuet, the forger of the broken sword, who finished the work of repair, and impressed on Perceval the great value of the weapon. Perceval visited Bel Repaire and saw Blanchefleur; and, after a number of minor adventures, met Hector and accepted his challenge for a fight. The combat was very severe, but an angel appeared, bearing the Grail, and cured them both of their wounds. Perceval then went to the castle of Partinal (Partinious, Pertiniel) who was the

slayer of Goon Desert, killed him, and carried his head to the Grail Castle, whereupon the Fisher King was cured of his wound.

A meal was served, accompanied by the same ceremony as was previously related. Perceval told his name to the King, and said he was born and brought up in Wales. The King replied that Perceval was his nephew, his sister's son, and desired to resign the rule to him, but Perceval refused to take it during his uncle's life. Perceval then went to King Arthur's court, where his adventures were recorded and placed at Salisbury. Later a damsels appeared and told Perceval that the Fisher King had died. Perceval went to Corbiere and was crowned King. There was much feasting, and the Grail supplied rich measure of food for the court.

After seven years, Perceval went to a hermitage, taking the Grail, and lance, and the dish; and on his death ten years afterwards, these wonderful articles must have been taken up to Heaven since no one saw them any more.

(3)

GERBERT'S CONTINUATION OF PERCEVAL

Gerbert alludes to the incomplete welding of the broken sword which was explained by Perce-

val's sin in having caused the death of his mother, and shows that further search for the Grail was necessary—thus linking his narrative with the incomplete narrative of Wauchier. Perceval lay down to sleep, but when he awoke in the morning the Grail Castle had disappeared and he found himself in the fields. He visited a castle and broke his sword by knocking at the castle door. An old man told him that this would prolong his search for seven years, and he gave Perceval a letter which would heal wounds and make the bearer of it invincible. Resuming his journey through a country now rendered prosperous by the effect of Perceval's asking a question at the Grail Castle, he came to a forge where a king had been forging a sword for a whole year; and this sword would only break in a certain peril and could only be mended at that forge. Perceval had his own sword mended there. The forger recognized the sword and said it had been originally broken at the gate of Paradise. As Perceval continued his journey, he restored to health and vigor Saigremor and Agrevain—two of King Arthur's knights—who had lost their reason at Mont Douloureux; and he arrived finally at King Arthur's court in the forest of Carlion.

As they sat at table Perceval noticed a golden

chair in which no one dared sit. It had been sent by a fairy as an obstacle to the Grail quest, since no one could find the Grail until he had been able to sit in the mysterious chair. Six knights had already made the attempt but had been swallowed up by the earth. Against strong protests Perceval decided to try and occupy the seat, and he succeeded; but the feat was accompanied by strange natural phenomena. Perceval, proceeding on his journeys, was joined by his sister, repulsed Mordret's attempt to carry her off, and arrived finally at the Castle of Maidens which was in charge of a cousin of Perceval, and he left his sister there. The cousin told Perceval about his mother, who was named Philosofine; and she also explained how she and Perceval's mother brought the Grail to the home of the Fisher King by God's command on account of the sinfulness of mankind. Perceval again visited the court, meeting there Kex, Gauvain, Tristan, and King Marc, and then continued his journeys. He met Gornumant, mortally wounded, and was informed that his troubles would cease if he would fulfill his word given to his betrothed, Blanchefleur, (Gornumant's niece) and marry her. Then appeared a hideous old woman, a sorceress, who possessed a potion which was used by Christ in the

sepulchre, and which would bring the dead to life; she said she was under the orders of the King of the Waste City (*Gaste Chité*) who was an enemy of all Christians.

After healing Gornumant with the magic potion Perceval rejoined Blanchefleur at Biau Repaire and received a warm welcome. They were married, but were much impressed with the holiness of chastity and resolved to follow it. During the night Perceval heard a voice which predicted great honor for him in future years. A prophecy regarding his descendants was made, ending with the statement that three brothers of his line would conquer Jerusalem; and he was told to continue his search for the bleeding lance and the Grail.

Perceval set out again on his journeys and experienced sundry adventures, finally reaching a hermitage where a maiden gave him a shield which could only be borne by one who was predestined to win the Grail, and immediately the meagre food which had been provided changed to a rich repast. His wanderings brought him to an abbey where he learned the story of Joseph of Arimathea. The conversion of King Evelac of Sarras by Joseph is given in a similar form to that of the narrative in the *Grand St. Graal*, and then Joseph's coming into the West with his company which included two

beautiful women—one, Philosophine, bearing a plate (*tailléoir*) “clearer than the moon” and the other a bleeding lance. Joseph also had a vessel (dish), the most beautiful which man ever saw. They were all thrown into prison by King Crudel, but were sustained by the Grail; and they were finally rescued by Mordrain (previously called Evelac) who received many wounds which would not be healed until the good knight should come. Perceval finally reached the Grail Castle, where he was received by the Fisher King. While eating a meal, the Grail appeared, followed by the Lance and a Sword. The Grail and Lance were each carried by a lovely maiden, and the Sword by a youth. Perceval joined the pieces of the broken sword, much to the joy of the King.

(4)

PEREDUR

Peredur was one of seven sons of the Earl Evrawc. The father and the other six sons fell in combats, and Peredur was brought up by his mother in the wilderness, where the boy was kept ignorant of wars and knights. Peredur met three knights, one of whom was Gwalchmai (Gawain). His mother told him they were angels, but Peredur

found out they were knights, and he decided to become one himself. The incident of the lady in the tent is told, and also the arrival at Arthur's court.

Peredur came to a lake, and saw an old man sitting on the shore, while his attendants were fishing. The old man went to a castle nearby, and Peredur followed him and accepted his invitation to sit down to meat. The old man explained that he was the brother of Peredur's mother and urged Peredur to remain at the castle and receive instructions as a knight. He also told Peredur that if he saw wonderful things he must not ask about them if no one should offer an explanation to him.

The next day Peredur came to another castle and found a stately old man sitting in the large hall; and he was welcomed to the repast which was served to the old man and his retinue. Accepting a test which was proposed, Peredur broke his sword thrice by cutting an iron ring with it. Twice the pieces of the broken ring and sword reunited themselves, but the third time they did not do so. The old man told him he had arrived at only two-thirds of his strength, but when he arrived at his full powers none would be able to withstand him. The old man further stated that he was another brother of Peredur's mother.

Two youths entered the hall bearing a great spear with three streams of blood flowing from the point; and all the attendants wailed in grief, but the old man did not refer to it, and so Peredur asked no explanation. Then entered two maidens bearing a salver on which was a man's head, lying in blood, and again the company lamented. Afterwards they all retired for the night. The meeting with a woman the next day is related, and the receipt from her of sundry explanations; and also the search by Arthur for Peredur. Then comes the visit of Peredur to a castle where a lovely maiden was in distress through the attacks of her enemies, whom Peredur vanquished. Being much attracted to the maiden of the castle, he remained three weeks. After that he visited the castle of the Nine Sorceresses of Gloucester and remained there also for three weeks. Then is related how Peredur saw a raven which had alighted on a dead bird, and how he compared the black raven and the white snow, and the red blood, to the hair and the skin and the blushes of his ladylove. Then comes the defeat of Kai, and the meeting with Gwalchmai, and the union with Arthur's company at Caerllion, where Peredur fell in love with Angharad Law Erawc. Then follow a number of adventures of minor importance.

The narrative then relates that when Peredur was at Arthur's court a hideous maiden appeared riding a yellow mule. She reproached Peredur for not asking about the wonders at the court of the lame King, and said that if he had done so, the King would have been restored to health and his lands would have had peace; and Peredur set forth to learn about the mysteries which the maiden has mentioned.

Peredur met a priest and was rebuked for wearing armor on that day, which was Good Friday; and after a short sojourn with the priest he set forth to find the Castle of Wonders, which he finally reached. Here he was joined by King Arthur and his men, and they slew the sorceresses of Gloucester, who were there, and thus took vengeance, since Peredur had learned that the bloody head he had seen at the castle was that of his cousin who had been killed by the sorceresses, and that they had also wounded his uncle.

(5)

"LA QUESTE DEL SAINT GRAAL"

The Knights of the Round Table were assembled at Camelot¹ on Whitsun Eve, in the year 454. A

¹ Various identifications have been made of Camelot, Arthur's capital. The probabilities seem to point to the region of the

damsel arrived from King Pelles and took Lancelot out into the forest and led him to a nunnery where he met his cousins Boort (or Bors) and Lionel. The nuns showed a wonderful youth called Galahad, and some thought he was Lancelot's son. Lancelot knighted the boy.

On Lancelot's return to Arthur's court a block of red marble was seen floating in the water, and in it was fastened a sword on which was written that only the best knight in the world could withdraw it. Gawain, Perceval, and others made the attempt but failed. An armored Knight then appeared, being announced as of the line of David and Joseph of Arimathea. He sat in the Perilous Seat at the Round Table without receiving damage, and explained that he was the nephew of King Pelles, and that the Rich Fisher was his grandfather. He was thus recognized as the son of Lancelot and of the daughter of the Fisher King. It was reported in the court that Galahad would end the wonders of Great Britain and that by him the maimed King would be healed. He succeeded easily in withdrawing the sword from the block of marble.

A young maiden then appeared, and grieved

river Camel, on the northern coast of Cornwall, near Tintagel Castle, where Arthur was born. The first mention of this place as Arthur's capital is in Chrétien's *Lancelot*.

that Lancelot should no longer be the best knight, and said that a hermit called Nasciens desired them to know that he would send the Holy Grail on that day to feed the knights of the Round Table. A tournament was arranged and Galahad showed his great skill. After Vespers they sat down to meat, thunder was heard and a bright light was seen. The Grail came into the presence of the diners, covered with white samite, and borne by unseen hands; and the room was filled with delicious perfumes. As the Grail passed around, each person received abundant food.

The Grail having passed out of their presence, Gawain informed the Knights that no one had heretofore been served thus except at the court of the maimed King. They all vowed to seek the Grail for a year and a day, or longer if need be, as they had not yet seen the vessel itself. They set forth, following different routes.

Galahad took no shield with him, but after five days' journey he arrived at an abbey where he obtained a mysterious shield originally belonging to King Evalac of the City of Sarras, and endowed with supernatural power by Josephus (the son of Joseph of Arimathea) for Evalac (afterwards called Mordrains), who had brought the shield to Great Britain. Josephus had come to Great Britain

with his father Joseph. They had been imprisoned there by King Crudel and rescued by Mordrains. The shield could not be used by anyone until Galahad should come, the last of the race of Mordrain's brother-in-law Nasciens.

In the course of his journeyings Galahad came to the Castle of Maidens and delivered the captives who were confined there, and who represented the good souls imprisoned in Hell before the advent of Jesus Christ.

The story then relates various adventures of Gawain and Galahad, which are not of special importance.

Lancelot's wanderings led him to a chapel; and he lay down to sleep at the foot of a cross which stood just outside. While he was half asleep a sick knight approached on a bier drawn by two horses. The knight lamented his illness, and the Holy Grail came from the chapel towards the knight and healed him; and then he left, swearing that he would not rest until he could learn why the Grail appeared in so many places in Logres (England), and who brought it there. Lancelot awoke, and was informed by a voice that on account of his love for Guinevere he was not fit to stay near the Holy Grail.

Perceval also had interesting adventures. He

learned from his aunt, a recluse, formerly Queen of the Waste Land, that he and Galahad and Bors would succeed in their quest of the Grail, and he received an explanation of the three great tables; the first, at which our Lord ate with his Apostles; the second, the table used by Joseph of Arimathea, when he came to England with four thousand companions, at which was a seat which no one but Josephus could occupy; the third, the Round Table, made in the time of Merlin. At this last there was one seat called the Perilous Seat, which could only be occupied by one who would achieve the Grail. He also learned that the Lance as well as the Grail was an object of inquiry so that its mysteries might be understood; and that the maimed King was at Castle Corbenic.

Perceval came to a monastery where he saw King Evalac (now called Mordrains) on a bed, suffering from wounds and totally blind because he had made an effort to see the Grail itself, after he and his brother-in-law Nasciens had rescued Joseph from the prison into which King Crudel had thrown him after his arrival in England with the Holy Grail. Evalac had been waiting four hundred years for the good knight to come when he would be healed.

Various adventures follow, relating to Perceval,

Lancelot, Gawain, and Bors—the most important of which is a vision which came to Lancelot and revealed to him the future greatness of his son Galahad.

Galahad, in his wanderings, was conducted by a damsel (afterwards shown to be Perceval's sister) to a ship in which were Perceval and Bors; and after sailing for fourteen days they came to a desert isle and found another ship lying there. On this ship they found a sword with strange hangings, which, with the bed on which it lay, was made the subject of a long explanation by the damsel. The ship had been built by Solomon and the sword had belonged to David. Perceval's sister made new hangings from her own hair. Galahad took the sword, but it came afterwards into the possession of Perceval.

Lancelot's journeys at last led to a castle wherein was a room containing the Holy Grail. He saw a priest there celebrating Mass, and attempted to enter the room but was struck down by a wind, and rendered dumb for fourteen days, during which he took no food. It was the Castle Corbenic. In due season he dined with King Pelles; and the Grail in some mysterious way provided all with abundant food. After this, Lancelot returned to Arthur's court.

Galahad and Perceval journeyed together for five years; then they met Bors, and they all arrived together at Castle Corbenic. There they found King Pelles. The broken sword with which Joseph had been wounded was brought before them, and Galahad alone could join the pieces. It was then given to Bors. At vesper time four damsels carried into the room a bed on which was a crowned man, who greeted Galahad as his deliverer from suffering. A man in the garb of a bishop appeared in a chair borne by angels and sat before the table on which was the Holy Grail. On his forehead was written that he was Joseph (son of Joseph of Arimathea) the first Bishop of Christendom. From the altar came four angels—two with lights, one with a cloth of red samite, and one with a bleeding lance. The Bishop began to celebrate the Sacrament, and when he raised the wafer it took a man's form. Joseph then vanished. From the Grail came a man with blood flowing from wounds in hands and feet and body, who gave the Sacrament to Galahad and his companions, and told them that the Grail was the dish used in the Last Supper. The holy vessel would be taken to the City of Sarras; and Galahad, Perceval and Bors should follow it there after Galahad had healed the maimed King. Galahad and his com-

panions set sail in Solomon's ship, in which they found the Holy Grail. On landing, they were imprisoned by King Escorant and fed during that period by the Holy Grail. Galahad was made King after Escorant's death. On the anniversary of Galahad's crowning, the Bishop appeared again and showed the Holy Grail to Galahad; and then Galahad died, and angels took his body. The Grail and the Lance were taken to heaven. Perceval died a year after this, and Bors then returned to Great Britain; and his tale was written down and kept in the Abbey of Salisbury.

(6)

“LE GRAND SAINT GRAAL”

The author begins by stating that the tale he is about to tell is taken from a book which was given to him by Our Lord Himself, in Brittany, 717 years after His Passion. The narrative begins with Joseph of Arimathea and corresponds in its main points with the commencement of Borron's *Joseph*; but with a different treatment of details. It relates that Joseph and a number of converts took the Holy Dish (*i.e.*, the dish of the Paschal Supper) in a wooden ark and traveled to Sarras

"between Babiloine and Salemandre," whence the Saracens came, and where Evalach reigned; and also how the latter was converted to Christianity through the efforts of Josephes, the son of Joseph, who had been consecrated there as a Bishop by Jesus Christ in a wonderful ceremony which had revealed the presence of the relics of the Passion in the ark which he had brought with him. A description is given of Evalach's successful fight against Tholomers, King of Egypt, through the Almighty's aid, and the conversion of Séraphe, the brother-in-law of Evalach. After baptism, Evalach was called *Mordrains*, and *Séraphe Nasciens*. It is then related that Mordrains undertook the forcible conversion of his subjects, and that Josephes, engaging in physical combat, was wounded in the thigh by an angel carrying a lance, the head of which remained in the wound. Josephes was told he should have confined himself to spiritual work.

The story then states that Josephes showed the ark and the Holy Vessel to Mordrains and Nasciens, and that the latter referred to it as the Grail, making use of a play upon words similar to that which is contained in Borron's *Joseph*. An angel appeared, drew out the lance-head, and foretold the wonderful adventures which would

come to them in the lands where God would lead them—all connected with the lance and the Holy Grail. The marvels of the Grail would only be seen thereafter by one man who would be the last of Nascien's race; and the lance would later wound also a King descended from Josephes, who would be healed when the good knight, descended from Nasciens might learn to know the wonders of the Holy Grail. The angel's message connected the lance symbolically with the one which pierced the side of Our Lord on the Cross.

After this there is a long section covering some wonderful adventures which befell Mordrains and Nasciens, including a prophetic dream of Mordrains in relation to the descent of the Grail knight from Nasciens. Mordrains and Nasciens were each conveyed by supernatural power to separate distant islands. Nasciens discovered there a ship without captain or crew. He found therein among other wonderful things a mysterious sword with strange hangings lying on a bed, which could only be used by one who surpassed all other men in goodness and bravery. A long explanation follows to show that the sword was David's and that the ship had been built by Solomon.

Celidoine, the son of Nasciens, joined his father and they set sail in Solomon's ship, being after-

wards joined by Mordrains; and a variety of adventures follow.

The story then relates that Joseph, Josephes, and their followers had gone to Great Britain with the Holy Grail. They had crossed from the Continent on the shirt of Josephes which miraculously sustained them on the water. Mention is made of the birth of a son to Joseph, who receives the name of Galahad. After sundry adventures Joseph went to preach in Norgales (North Wales), taking the Holy Grail with him. There he and his companion were imprisoned by King Crudel. King Mordrains, being warned by a dream of Joseph's troubles, took ship and went to his assistance. He finally arrived in Great Britain, and rescued Joseph and his friends. The next day while Josephes was officiating as a priest before the Grail, Mordrains was moved by curiosity to come too near and was stricken by blindness and paralysis. A voice told him that when the Good Knight should come he would be healed. He retired to a monastery to await this event, and after many years Perceval le Gallois and Galahad saw him there.

In the course of Josephes' travels he was one day sitting at the table with his companions; and the Grail was placed thereon. One seat was left

vacant between Josephes and Brons to represent the seat occupied by the Saviour at the Last Supper. Moys attempted to occupy this seat but was carried away in flames by mysterious hands.

One of Brons' twelve sons, Alain le Gros, choosing to remain unmarried, was allotted to the service of the Grail, and was to be Grail Keeper after Josephes' death. One day, at Josephes' orders, Alain caught a fish which miraculously sufficed to feed many; and he was called the Rich Fisher; and all Grail Keepers would hereafter bear this title. In the course of his travels Josephes was seized by some heathen, and wounded by a sword which broke, leaving its point in the wound; but Josephes withdrew the point, and said the sword should not be mended except by him who should gain the Perilous Seat in the time of King Arthur. Joseph's son Galahad became king of Cocelice (Hocelice), and reigned so well that the name of the kingdom was afterwards called Gales (Wales) after him.

The deaths of Joseph and Josephes are related—both being buried in Scotland—the former in the Abbey of Glays¹—and Alain took charge of the Grail, for which a castle was built, called Corbenic.

¹ In Hucher's text, the Abbey of La Croix.

After Alain's death his brother Josue became Grail Keeper. One of his successors was Pellehans, called the Maimed King because he was wounded in battle in the two thighs. He could not be healed until the good knight Galahad should come. Pellehans was followed by his son Pelles, from whose daughter Lancelot begat Galahad, born out of wedlock.

(7)

PARZIVAL

Gamuret of Anjou, the son of King Gandein, at his father's death had to yield precedence to his older brother, and went to distant lands to seek his fortune. By his gallant bearing and his brave conduct as a warrior he won the love of the Moorish Queen Belakané, who dwelt in Patelamunt; and by his marriage to her he became king of Assagog and Zassamank. Afterwards he left her, as she was a heathen and unbaptized. He departed in secret, but left a letter saying he was from Anjou, of Breton descent, and that one of his ancestors was Mazadan, who married a fairy. After his departure a son was born, who was both black and white; his name was Feirifis.

Gamuret went first to Seville and afterwards to Wales, where he found a tournament was to be

held at Kanvoleis, and the Queen Herzeleide had offered herself and her lands for a prize. She was widow of King Kastis, and reigned over Norgals¹ and Wales (*i.e.* North Wales and Wales). Among the celebrities gathered for the tournament were Uther Pendragon, his son-in-law King Lot of Norway, Gawain son of the latter, and Morhold of Ireland. Gamuret showed great valor and won the heart of Herzeleide, who persuaded him that his marriage to a heathen was not binding, and that he was free to marry her, which he did.

Hearing that the Baruch, a monarch who reigned at Bagdad, and under whom he had fought in the East, was beset by Ipomidon and Pompey—two neighboring warriors—Gamuret went to that distant land to give his help, but he lost his life there.

After Gamuret's death, Herzeleide gave birth to a son. Still grieving over Gamuret's death, she took the child and hid in a distant forest, and arranged with her attendants that no one should reveal to her son his birthright or his father's name, as she felt that knighthood was the basis of her woe. The child grew in strength and beauty, and had great knowledge of woodcraft.

¹ Norgals—North Wales; but the author seemed to consider the story as located in Spain and France.

One day he met three mounted knights in glittering armor, and thought they were gods; and soon another knight, even more imposing appeared. The latter saw how the boy wondered, and observing his remarkable beauty, recommended him to go to King Arthur and become a knight himself. On his return home he told his mother of his adventure; and she, seeing it was impossible to prevent him from going to the King, dressed him in coarse clothing, and sent him forth with good advice about courtesy, and the pure love of women. She also told him that a knight called Lahelein had taken the lands of Waleis and Norgals which were both his patrimony; and the boy vowed vengeance.

His first adventure was to find Jeschuté, the wife of Duke Orilus of Lalandé, sleeping alone in her tent, while the Duke was absent. The youth seized her ring, took some unwilling kisses from her lips, and rode on his way. The Duke returned, saw that a stranger had been there, and would not believe his wife's story, but stripped her of her finery and rode with her to find the mysterious visitor, and take vengeance. The Duke was a great warrior, an enemy of the Round Table.

Meanwhile the youth, on his journey, met a maiden Siguné sorrowing over the dead body of a

knight. They talked of the knight's death, which had occurred in a joust; and the maiden asked the boy's name, to which he could only say he was always called "Bon fils, Cher fils, Beau fils." Siguné then recognized him as her cousin, and told him his name was *Parzival*, that he was born at Kanvoleis, that his father was an Angevin and his mother of the land of Waleis; and that he was King of Norgals. She also said the dead knight was his kinsman and had been slain by Duke Orilus.

Parzival continued his journey. Near the city of Nantes he met Ither of Gaheveiss, known as the Red Knight, who sent word to King Arthur that he was awaiting some opponent for a combat. In the city he met a warm welcome from the Knights of the Round Table, and aroused the interest of King Arthur. He was seen by Kunnewaaré, the sister of Duke Orilus, a proud maiden who had vowed she would never laugh until she saw the bravest of all knights; but when she saw Parzival she laughed loud, and was punished by Kay for her levity.

Parzival went himself to meet the Red Knight, slew him, arrayed himself in the knight's armor; and, finding that he had here killed a knight who was beloved at Arthur's court, he rode away from the city. At nightfall he came to the castle of

Prince Gurnemanz of *Graharz*, where he met a warm welcome; but he caused great astonishment by the rough clothing which was seen when his armor was removed. The next day he was given rich clothing; and he remained a fortnight, receiving instruction in the duties and work of knighthood; and, among other bits of advice, Gurnemanz cautioned him against freedom in asking questions. He felt a tender affection for Liassé, the Prince's daughter.

Parzival journeyed thence to Pelrapär the kingdom of Brobarz. Here he met the beautiful Queen Kondwiramur whose lands had been wasted by King Klamidé and his seneschal Kingron. She was a cousin of the fair Liassé, whose brother Schenteflur had been slain by Klamidé while in Kondwiramur's service. The next day Parzival vanquished Kingron, and won the love of Kondwiramur, and married her. Parzival sent Kingron to King Arthur's court with a greeting to the Round Table, and especially to Kunnewaaré who had suffered on his account. King Klamidé was then vanquished by Parzival, and he was also sent to Arthur's court.

One day Parzival started to seek his mother and inquire after her welfare. On his journey he came to a body of water on which were a number of

fishing boats; and in one of them was a man clothed in rich raiment. Parzival inquired of him about a shelter for the night, and was directed to a castle where he himself would be Parzival's host. Parzival was received with distinction. A rich mantle was sent to him by the Queen of the castle, Répanse de Schoie. Then he was conducted to the great hall where he saw four hundred knights; and the King, who was ill, lay on a couch.

A squire entered, carrying a lance which bled from its point. He passed around the room and disappeared; and the company wept and wailed greatly as they seemed to think of some woe. Then a procession entered the hall; two maidens each holding a golden candlestick, then two bearing two stools, then four bearing tall tapers, and four carrying a table of jacinth. Then came four maidens with lights, and two bearing sharp silver knives resting on cloths, which were laid on the jacinth table. Then followed six more maidens, and then one of great beauty bearing aloft on a cushion "that thing which men call 'The Grail.'" She was the Queen Répanse de Schoie, and she was selected for this office by the Grail itself. She placed the Grail on the jacinth table, and the maidens made ceremonious steps and salutations. Tables were set for the four hundred knights, and

food was served. Then one hundred squires took bread from the Grail and gave it to the knights; and food of all kinds was served by the Grail, according to the desires of the knights. A squire entered bearing a sword and sheath decorated with jewels, which the King gave to Parzival.

As the feast ended, Parzival saw through an open door an old man lying on a couch, but nothing was said about him. Parzival retired for the night after receiving every attention, and slept until the next noon. He found his horse ready, but the castle empty; and as he left it he heard a voice saying that he had lost a chance for fame by not asking about the wonders. As he passed on, he met Siguné, and learned from her that he had been at the mysterious castle of Monsalväsch in the kingdom called Terre de Salväsch. It was once inhabited by Titurel, and had been bequeathed by him to his son Frimutel and was now occupied by the latter's invalid son Anfortas. Siguné noticed his sword, which she said had magic qualities; but when she found he had failed to ask about the mysteries at the castle she bitterly reproached Parzival. Had he done so the King would have been released from his burden, and he himself would have won great fame.

Then appeared Duke Orilus and Duchess

Jeschuté; and a duel was fought, and Orilus was vanquished. Parzival removed the Duke's suspicions of his wife, and sent both of them to Arthur's court with greetings for Kunnewaaré.

Arthur set out from Karidol¹ to find Parzival and unwittingly they approached each other. Parzival was discovered gazing at some drops of blood from a wounded bird that stained the snow on the ground. He was thinking of his fair Kondwiramur and the red and white tints in her face. Segramor attacked Parzival, and afterwards Kay did so; but both were vanquished. Gawain, having informed Parzival that Kay was one of his victims, persuaded him to go at last to see Kunnewaaré whom he had thus at last avenged.

Arthur and his suite greeted Parzival and invited him to become a Knight of the Round Table; and he was received into that company and Queen Guinevere gave him a kiss of welcome. But Kondrie the sorceress appeared, hideous in looks, riding a mule. She told Arthur he had dishonored the Round Table by receiving Parzival; and she told Parzival he was disgraced by his failure to ask about the mysteries at Monsalväschen and thus to bring peace to the suffering Fisher King. Kondrie also explained about Parzival's high birth and

¹ Karidol—Carduel, *i.e.*, Carlisle.

distinguished ancestry. She further told the assembled knights about four queens and four hundred maidens at Chateau Merveil who needed help; and then she departed. Then appeared a knight, richly apparelléd, who said he was Kingrimursel, Landgrave of Schamfanzon, of the country of Askalon; he turned to King Arthur and accused Gawain of killing his lord and kinsman; and he challenged Gawain to fight him in forty days before the King of Askalon.

Parzival was now sad at the thought of his shortcomings, and he set out to seek the Grail, receiving a tender farewell from Kunnewaaré. Other knights set out for the Chateau Merveil, and Gawain started for Askalon.

On his way, Gawain came to the city of Beaurosch where he had a love affair with Obilot the young daughter of Duke Lippaut; and he vanquished King Meljanz of Lys who was besieging the Duke. Gawain finally arrived at the Castle of Schamfanzon in Askalon where he was charmed by the loveliness of Queen Antikonie the sister of King Vergulacht. He made love to her, and thus earned the resentment of some knights who attacked him. Gawain defended himself with a chessboard, while Antikonie threw the heavy chess men at the assailers. Kingrimursel arrived in

time to save Gawain from harm, and explained to the King the reason for Gawain's visit. They arranged to postpone for a year the contest they had agreed to fight; and Gawain undertook to set out on a search for the Grail.

Meanwhile Parzival had wandered far on his quest. He arrived at a hermitage which was occupied by Siguné, still mourning for her dead knight. She told him she was nourished by food from the Grail, brought weekly by Kondrie. He hastened on, hoping to meet the sorceress, and thus learn where the Grail castle was situated. He met and overcame a knight who hailed from Monsalväsch. After a time he met some pilgrims who rebuked him for going in armor on that day, and told him it was Good Friday. He came to the cavern of Trevrezent the hermit, and learned from him many of the marvels connected with the Grail and its service. Many knights were at Monsalväsch whence they went on distant journeys. Their life and strength came from a wondrous stone called lapsit (*lapis?*) *exillis* which revivified the Phoenix, and had the power of giving perpetual youth to those who daily looked at it. On each Good Friday a dove came from Heaven and placed a Host upon the stone, which thus renewed its power of conveying all good

things to mankind. A mystic writing on the Grail was the means of notifying any of its attendants that some service was required. In the course of conversation Parzival learned that the hermit was his uncle—his mother's brother—and that his mother had died of grief over his departure for a knightly career. A younger sister of the hermit was Répanse de Schoie who always attended the Grail. Anfortas the Grail King was the hermit's brother, who, as eldest son, became Lord of the Grail on the death of their father Frimutel. Anfortas neglected to hold himself aloof from earthly love, as he should have done; he loved a lady and became her knight, and thus brought sorrow and woe to himself and his followers. He received a wound in the thigh from a poisoned spear in the hand of a heathen knight; and nothing would cure it. The knights prayed to the Grail for help, and were informed by the mystic writing that a knight would come to the castle, and if on the first night he should spontaneously ask about the King's sufferings, the King would be restored, and the knight should inherit the guardianship of the Grail. Parzival confessed to his uncle that he had been at Monsalväsch and had failed to ask the question. Trevrezent further told Parzival that Anfortas was often carried to a lake called

Brimbane where he amused himself by fishing. The spear which Parzival saw, was at certain seasons plunged into Anfortas' wound and brought relief from pain although causing woe to the on-lookers. One service rendered by the Grail was to send one of its knights to rule over a land whose people had lost their monarch and had asked God to send one. Trevrezent also explained that the old man whom Parzival had seen on a couch at the Grail castle was Titurel, his great grandfather, the first King of the Grail; he was ever ill, but was kept alive by the power of the Grail.

Gawain's adventures are here related at length. At the end of his year of truce he did not fight Kingrimursel, since it was shown that he was guiltless of the murder which had been attributed to him. His wanderings brought him to the castle of Logrois where dwelt the beautiful Orgelusé, by whom Gawain was charmed, but she repelled his advances scornfully. A man of horrible appearance called Malcréature, who was the brother of Kondrie, came up, riding a wretched looking mare; and he joined in the mockery. They met a wounded knight, Prince Urien of Punturtois, who, by a trick, secured Gawain's horse and rode away. Orgelusé continued to mock him as he went along leading the knight's

miserable mare. Gawain fought and vanquished a knight named Lischois Giwellius and won the latter's horse which proved to be his own horse Gringuljet, stolen from him by Urian.

Gawain found himself now in La Terre Merveil. He was cared for over night by a boatman and his sweet daughter, Bené, and in the morning he learned that a wondrous castle he had noticed, filled with beautiful maidens, was the Chateau Merveil. He also heard that Parzival had recently passed him, seeking the Grail. He proceeded to the Chateau and found it apparently uninhabited. In one of the rooms he found the Marvellous Bed; and on his attempting to occupy it he experienced great wonders—a great clamor of noises was heard, hundreds of missiles were thrown at him, and a ferocious lion attacked him. Gawain barely escaped this ordeal with his life. He was tenderly cared for by the aged Queen Arnivé and her maidens, who were imprisoned there.

The next day, while Gawain conversed with Arnivé and her daughter Sangivé (who is subsequently shown to be Gawain's mother) and the latter's two daughters Itonjé and Kondrie,—called “the four queens”—he inquired about a wonderful shining pillar erected by the castle

and learned that it was brought from the East by Klingsor and that it reflected the view from six miles around; and while he looked on it he saw Orgelusé and a renowned Knight called Turkowit approaching the castle. Gawain rode for the vanquished Turkowit, and was thus permitted to proceed with Orgelusé whom he loved deeply in spite of her treatment of him. He crossed with difficulty the Perilous Ford to pluck a garland for Orgelusé! The place was guarded by King Gramoflanz, whose father had been killed by Gawain's father, King Lot; and when he found that Gawain was before him he challenged Gawain to combat at Ioflanz in sixteen days. Gawain recrossed the Ford, and learned from Orgelusé that her former lover Eidegast had been slain by Gramoflanz, but that she was now ready to accept Gawain as she had only been testing him by her unfriendly conduct. She also told Gawain that Anfortas the Grail King had loved her, and had suffered for doing so. She further stated that only one man had seen her without offering his services; he bore red armor, was very valiant, had a wife at Pelrapär, and was called Parzival. They went together to the Chateau Merveil and Gawain sent a message to King Arthur to come to Ioflanz with his knights and ladies to see the fight.

While staying at Chateau Merveil, Gawain learned from Arnivé many interesting facts about this mysterious castle, built by the magician Klingsor who had come from Italy; and she told Gawain that by withstanding the terrible tests of the Marvellous Bed he was to receive the castle and the kingdom from Klingsor. Arthur and his court arrived in due season to attend the combat, and Gawain was able to inform Arthur that the Queen Arnivé was the wife of Uther Pendragon, and consequently Arthur's mother. In an early part of the poem it is stated that she had eloped with the magician Klingsor.

The day before the combat Gawain rode out upon the plain, and met a knight whom he took to be Gramoflanz. They fought, and Gawain was defeated; but when the stranger learned that his opponent had been Gawain he announced that he was Parzival, and he was filled with grief at the thought that he had fought his kinsman. They went back to Arthur's camp and all were interested and pleased to see Parzival again.

Early the next morning Parzival stole out on the plain to the place where the lists were prepared, hoping to meet Gramoflanz; and they met and fought. Gawain was prepared for the encounter he expected to have, and arrived on the

plain to see a fight already in progress; and it ended in the defeat of Gramoflanz. The great assemblage of knights which had gathered to attend the battle was now dispersed until the next day, when Gawain himself would meet Gramoflanz. But the conflict did not take place. Itonje, Gawain's sister, and Gramoflanz loved each other; and by Arthur's mediation to prevent family strife, peace was declared between the expected combatants. Great happiness followed, and Gawain was finally united to Orgelusé. All this joy caused Parzival to think of his absent Kondwiramur, and to feel that he was out of place in these surroundings, so he slipped away unseen in the early morning.

He soon met a knight in magnificent armor. They engaged in a mighty contest without definite result and while resting they engaged in conversation and discovered that they were half-brothers—the newcomer being Feirefis Angevin. They went together to Arthur's court, and received a warm welcome. A maiden, richly dressed, but heavily veiled, joined them there shortly afterwards. Her mantle was of costly velvet, and was decorated with figures of turtle-doves—the badge of the Grail. She made special obeisance to Parzival, and revealed herself as Kondrie the

sorceress. She announced to Parzival that the Grail had decreed that he should be its King, and that he should bring to the Grail-Kingdom his wife Kondwiramur and their twin sons, Lohengrin and Kardeiss, born after Parzival's departure. She also told him that by his asking the mysterious question Anfortas would be healed.

After an interval of four days Parzival, Feirefis and Kondrie set out for Monsalväscht; but, before starting, Parzival told the assembled multitude the story of the Grail as he had heard it from Trevrezent—explaining how no one could find it save he whom God called to the task. They finally came to the Grail Castle and were received gladly. Being brought into the presence of Anfortas, Parzival prayed for the ending of the former's woe, and turning to him said “What aileth thee here, mine Uncle?” Promptly healing came to Anfortas, and his face was filled with beauty; and Parzival was hailed King of the Grail.

Hearing that Kondwiramur was approaching, he rode to meet her, and found the great company in camp at the place where he had seen the drops of blood in the snow. There he had a joyful meeting with his wife and saw for the first time his twin sons. Parzival turned his inherited possessions over to his son Kardeiss who was crowned King

and returned to them with the retinue. Parzival, Kondwiramur, and Lohengrin went on to Monsalväschen and received a warm welcome. The company gathered in the great hall. The procession of maidens took place. Feirefis was lost in admiration of Répanse de Schoie who bore the Grail, but he did not seem to see the Grail itself; and this was explained by the fact that he was unbaptized, so the sight of it was withheld from him. He consented to be baptized in order to win the hand of the lovely Grail-maiden, and the ceremony took place the next morning. After some days, Feirefis and the bride he had won set out for their distant home in the East; and there Répanse de Schoie gave birth to a son called Prester John who became very famous.

Wolfram's poem ends with a short reference to the later life of Lohengrin, who was directed by the Grail to go to the assistance of the Duchess of Brabant. This lady was besought by the counts of her realm to take to herself a husband, but she would marry only him who should be sent by God. Lohengrin came from Monsalväschen to Antwerp in a swan-boat, and was married to the Duchess. They lived happily and had children, but finally the Duchess broke a promise which he had exacted to the effect that she would never ask his

name or whence he came. And Lohengrin returned in the swan-boat to the house of the Grail, leaving his sword, his horn and his ring as mementos of him.

(8)

THE PROSE LANCELOT

Ban, King of Benoic, and Bohor, King of Gannes, both of whom ruled over countries on the borders of Brittany, married sisters. King Ban and his Queen Hélène (of the race of Joseph of Arimathea) had one child, baptized Galaad but called Lancelot in memory of his grandfather who had reigned over both these kingdoms. Ban was attacked by King Claudas of Bourges, and died while making his escape. Lancelot was carried away by a maiden who disappeared with him in a lake. She was a fairy, the Lady of the Lake, and had learned her wisdom from Merlin by encouraging his love. Her name was Viviane. The lake was an optical illusion created by her magic.

Viviane brought up Lancelot with the greatest care. At eighteen years of age he went to Arthur's court in Great Britain to become a knight. The Lady of the Lake accompanied him with her retinue. They found Arthur at Camelot. Here

Lancelot had many adventures. Gauvain (Gawain) is a prominent character in the tale; and various other knights mentioned in the preceding romances also appear. Arthur's conflicts with the Saxons and other enemies are related; and the mutual regard of Genièvre (Guinevere) and Lancelot is indicated.

A false Genièvre made known her pretensions to be the rightful queen. Her knights took Arthur captive, and carried him to Carmelide where he became enamored of her through the effect of a love philtre which she gave him. Queen Genièvre was condemned as a usurper. Lancelot offered to defend her, and he was the victor over three knights—thus vindicating Genièvre and assisting in a reconciliation between the King and the Queen.

Meleagan, son of King Baudemagus of Gorre, succeeded in abducting the Queen. Lancelot pursued him, and while doing so he was persuaded to mount into a cart by the promise of a dwarf to conduct him to the place where the Queen was.¹ He finally conquered and slew Meleagan.

Gauvain's wanderings led him to a castle where he was received with much honor. A knight entered with a retinue and was announced as the

¹ See the Charette story mentioned in Chapter VII.

King. Gauvain saw a white dove, carrying a golden censer in its beak, which passed into an adjoining room. Meanwhile sweet odors filled the air, and the company all knelt. The tables were then set, and all took seats in silence, and afterwards knelt in prayer. From the room into which the dove had gone came a lovely maiden holding aloft in her hand a beautiful vase in the form of a chalice. It was neither of wood, nor metal, nor stone. All the tables were immediately filled with the choicest food. The maiden made a tour of the hall and then returned by the door whence she entered. On taking his seat at the table Gauvain found that no food was before his place. As he sought to inquire from his companions the reason of this, they all disappeared. Gauvain passed into an adjacent room saw a marvellous bed, and made ready to occupy it. A maiden's voice warned him it was *le Lit Aventureux*. He took some arms which were near by, and returned to the bed, when he heard a demoniac cry; and a lance burning at the point came from the next room and struck him on the shoulders, causing a deep wound. Then followed sundry marvellous adventures with a serpent, a leopard, and a terrible wind. Gauvain heard sounds of lamentation, and saw twelve maidens who wept sorely.

Later the beautiful maiden reappeared with the mysterious vase, and placed it on a silver table; and Gauvain heard singing of matchless sweetness. A crowd of people came and put him into a cart. He fell asleep and when he awoke in the morning he found himself still in this ignominious condition, and his horse attached to the cart by the tail. An old man told him he had been at the Castle Corbenic. A hermit, whom he found at the close of day, explained to him that the vase he had seen was the Holy Grail which has received the blood of Our Lord, and told him he had not been in a state of grace sufficient to be allowed to partake of the food which was served by the Grail. Gauvain then continued his search for Lancelot which had been thus interrupted.

(9)

THE DIDOT PERCEVAL

After Arthur was crowned, Merlin arrived at the court and told the barons that Arthur was the son of Uter Pendragon and had been brought up by Antor who had cared for him as a son during his early years. Merlin explained to Arthur how the Round Table had been made for his father Uter Pendragon, as the previous one was for Joseph of Arimathea; and he said that Arthur's success

against the Romans could only be secured by establishing now the association of knights called the Round Table. Merlin also told Arthur about Joseph's care of the Grail, and said that it was at that time in the care of the rich Fisher King who was old and sick, and could not be well until there should come a knight of the highest character and of the greatest prowess at arms. When this knight should come to the mansion of the Fisher King and ask him the use of the Grail the King would be cured, and the enchantments of Britain would end.

At that time Alein le Gros was fatally ill. The Holy spirit spoke to him and said that the Grail was then in charge of his father Brons who lived in the "isles of Illande," but that Brons would not die until Alein's son Percevaux had found him and had learned the secret words taught by Joseph; and then Brons would be cured of his illness. Percevaux must go first to Arthur's court and obtain arms.

At the season of Pentecost there was a great assemblage of knights at Arthur's court in Carduel for a feast of the Round Table. When they gathered at the table one seat was left vacant.

Then there was a tournament in which Gauvain and Key, and Hurgains, and Beduers, and Sacremors, and Lancelot du Lac and other knights took

part. Aleine, niece of Gauvain (in another manuscript his sister) saw Percevaux, and loved him, and sent him a suit of red armor; and the next day Perceval le Gallois (now so called) entered the lists. Perceval conquered all his opponents, and, being brought before King Arthur, he claimed the privilege of occupying the empty seat at the Round Table. Arthur warned him of the death of Moys under such circumstances (as related in the “Joseph”) but allowed Perceval to take the seat. The rocks and the earth itself showed great commotion, but no further terrors occurred; and a voice told Arthur about the Fisher King and the Grail.

Perceval swore that he would not spend two successive nights in the same place until he had found the Fisher King’s mansion. The same oath was sworn by Gauvain, Sagremors, Beduers, Hurgains, and Erec. They all set forth, but separated, each going his own way.

Two unimportant incidents of Perceval’s journey then follow—the capture of the Knight of the Tent and the visit to the Castle containing the self-playing chessboard, where he killed the white stag.

Perceval arrived at his father’s house where he was born. He found his sister there with her

niece. She did not recognize Perceval but told him, weeping, how her brother Perceval had gone to Arthur's court, and how their mother had died. Perceval then revealed himself to his sister. She asked him if he had been at the court of the Fisher King, and told him of his hermit uncle who lived near by, and of the family's notable ancestry; and she said that Brons had the care of the Grail—the vessel into which Our Lord's blood was received. They visited the hermit, who urged Perceval to continue his search, and told him he would be charged with the care of The Grail.

(Here follow other incidents of minor importance—the killing of a knight; the conflict with another knight who was accompanied by a hideous damsel, both of whom were sent to Arthur's court where the damsel proved to be the most beautiful woman in the world¹; the conflict with Urban at the ford near a magic castle, where Urban's mistress and her maidens in the shape of great birds placed Perceval in much danger; the meeting with two naked children in the branches of a tree who directed him towards the Grail.)

He afterwards came to a river and saw three men fishing in a boat. The principal occupant of the boat expressed a wish that Perceval would

¹ This incident is included in Wauchier's story see Chapter V.

come to his house. Perceval accepted the invitation and finally arrived at the castle where he was cordially welcomed. Servants carried the host, an old man, into the hall where he was waiting. This was the Fisher King, the father of Alein le Gros, and grandfather of Perceval. While a meal was being served a servant entered bearing a lance from which issued a drop of blood; then came a maiden who carried two silver plates (tailloers); and then a servant with a vessel in which was the blood of Our Lord, and before which all bowed reverently. Perceval would have asked about these things had he not feared to displease his host. He thought of the incident all night. In the morning he could find no one in the castle, so he rode forth again, and after some time he met a damsels weeping, who called him by name, Perceval le Gallois, and told him he was to be pitied, since he had been at the house of the rich Fisher King, his grandfather, and had failed to ask about the Grail. Had he asked this, the King would have been cured, and would have regained his youth, the prophecy revealed to Joseph would have been fulfilled, and the enchantments of Britain would have been removed. The damsels told him, however, he would have another chance.

(Here follows the combat with the knight whose brother was the Knight of the Tomb.)

Perceval then wandered for seven years, during which period he sent more than one hundred prisoners to Arthur's court, but he became much depressed at his failure to find his grandfather's court and he lost his memory so that he remembered not God nor did he enter any church. On a Good Friday he met a knight and some ladies in the garb of penitents, and they asked him why he went armed on that day. Perceval's memory returned, and he repented, and went to his uncle the hermit, made confession, and learned from his uncle that his sister had died two years previously. Perceval remained with the hermit two days, and then rode forth, and after a while he met seven squires who belonged to Melianz de Liz. They were all going to the white castle to attend a tournament, for which the damsel of the castle was to be the prize. All the Knights of the Round Table were expected to attend as they had all returned from the quest of the Grail, unsuccessful. Perceval arrived at the tournament and watched the great feats of Melianz and Gauvain and other knights. The next day Perceval being allowed to wear the scarf of the maiden of the castle, entered the tournament and vanquished

Melianz, Key, Gauvain, Lancelot, and all who came against him. Being asked then if he would marry the maiden, Perceval replied that he could not marry any woman. An old man then appeared and reminded Perceval that he had broken his word not to sleep two nights in any one place until he had found the Grail. The old man then revealed himself to be Merlin; and he told Perceval he would find his grandfather within a year. Perceval set forth again, and the same night he found the home of the Fisher King and was admitted into the hall where the King was. The table was set; and after the meal had been begun, the Grail was brought into the room as before. Perceval asked an explanation about the holy vessel, and the King was immediately cured.

The latter asked Perceval who he was; and when the King was informed that Perceval was his grandson he gave thanks to God and led Perceval before the Grail, and told him that the lance had belonged to Longis who pierced the Saviour's side, and that the holy vessel was the one in which His blood had been received, and that it was called the Grail because it was agreeable to worthy men and to all who might remain in its presence. Then Brons knelt before the Grail, and the Holy Spirit announced that the prophecy was to be ful-

filled, and that he must teach Perceval the secret words which the Lord taught Joseph in the prison, and which Joseph taught to him. Brons did this, and then angels carried him away. Perceval remained, and there was an end to the enchantments of Britain and of the whole world. The same day Arthur and the Knights around the Round Table heard the rocks and the earth make a great noise, at which they marveled greatly.

Then follows a section which relates that Merlin went to Arthur's court and brought the news that Perceval had become Lord of the Grail; and it is further told that Arthur crossed to France, but was recalled home by the news of the treachery of Mordret, and was wounded and taken to Avalon —this latter corresponding to the *Mort Artu* romance hereafter considered.

(10)

LA SUITE DU MERLIN

A month after Arthur was crowned, the wife of the King of Orkanie came to Carduel with her four sons. Arthur fell in love with her and a child was born to them, to whom was given the name Mordrec. Soon afterwards Merlin appeared to Arthur in the form of a child, and revealed to him that he was the son of Uter, so that

the wife of the king of Orkanie was his sister. Merlin also prophesied that a knight not yet born would cause the fall of the King and his kingdom of Logres.

Messengers from the Emperor of Rome appeared at the palace and claimed tribute, but Arthur replied that he held his kingdom from God, and the messengers departed in defiant mood.

Meanwhile Gifflet, one of the King's attendants, had encountered a knight in the forest and had been wounded. Arthur went forth to seek this knight and fought him, and only escaped injury himself by Merlin's magical assistance.

Arthur desired now to obtain a better sword, and Merlin told him of a marvelous one which was in a lake where some fairies lived. They visited the lake and saw an arm arising out of the water and holding the sword. A maiden undertook to get the sword and did so, much to Arthur's pleasure. The name of the sword was *Escalibor*.

Arthur arranged a marriage of his sister Morgue with King Urien of Garlot. Their son was Yvain.

When the time approached for the birth of the child who was to have so fatal an effect on Arthur, the King tried to collect all the children who were recently born, and gathered 712 in all, and sent them off in a vessel without a pilot; but King

Oriant, who lived in a castle called Amalvi, rescued the children. King Loth had sent the newly-born boy named Mordrec to Arthur, but the child was rescued and taken to Nabur le Desrée who brought up the infant with his own son Sagremor.

King Mark, who subsequently married Iseut, came to Arthur's court to help him in his wars, because Mark's lands were subject to the kingdom of Logres.

Balaain and his brother Baluan went to seek King Rion who was fighting against Arthur, and took him captive. Loth also attacked Arthur but was killed by Pellinor, and his son Gavain swore vengeance. In these battles Balaain showed great prowess. He was called "le chevalier aux deux épées."

After relating in detail the adventures of Balaain, the story reverts to Arthur, who consulted Merlin about the project of marrying Gennevre, daughter of King Leodegan of Carmelide, who possessed the Round Table established by Merlin for Uter. Merlin visited Leodegan who agreed to give his daughter to Arthur, and also, the Round Table, and 100 knights.

Merlin and Gennevre returned to Arthur for the marriage, and Merlin chose forty-eight more

knights for the Round Table. One seat was left vacant for the knight who would put an end to the kingdom of Logres. When all the knights assembled around the table it was seen that the name of each was miraculously marked on his seat, which proved the pleasure which God took in the institution of the Round Table.

After telling of the marriage of Arthur, the narrative includes certain adventures of Gavain, who was now a knight. A maiden who had figured in these adventures is found to be Niviene¹ who stated she was the daughter of a prominent man in Brittany, but concealed the fact that her father was a king. Merlin fell in love with her; but she feared Merlin. She made him promise to teach her his enchantments and not to use them against her. Niviene's father, the King of Northumberland, near Brittany, asked Arthur to return his daughter to her home. Merlin acted as her escort; and after crossing the sea they arrived in the kingdom of King Ban of Benoic. His queen Helaine received them at the castle of Trèbe, and showed them her son Lancelot, whose baptismal name was Galaad.

¹ Niviene (Viviane) was the Lady of the Lake who carried Lancelot away and brought him up. See the narrative of the *Prose Lancelot* in Chapter VII.

Merlin and Viviene continued on their way and came to the lake of Diane, and Merlin built her a beautiful house there. After a while they returned to Great Britain. Meanwhile five kings had declared war against Arthur but were vanquished. Merlin and the "Lady of the Lake" passed through the Perilous forest, and he showed her a magnificent tomb which was there. In the night she enchanted him and put him into the tomb. Viviene went on, and found Arthur fighting with Accalon, the lover of Morgue, who hated Arthur and had secured for Accalon the Sword Escalibor. Arthur was nearly vanquished when Viviene by enchantment enabled him to recover his sword, and gain the victory.

(II)

THE MORT ARTU

The tale opens with Arthur's announcement of a tournament at Winchester, and with a reference to the intrigue between Queen Guinevere and Lancelot, which was known to Agravain, an enemy of Lancelot. Agravain (Engrevains) plotted to entrap Lancelot. At the tournament Lancelot took part in disguise, but wore as a decoration the sleeve of a maiden at whose father's castle of Ascalot he

had stopped en route.¹ Lancelot gained several victories but was wounded by Boort (Bors).

Arthur proclaimed another tournament at Thanebourg.² Meanwhile Gawain discovered Lancelot's shield at Ascalot where it had been left during the tournament at Winchester, and he ascertained that the maiden there had become enamored of Lancelot; and he reported the news to Arthur.

Guinevere learned of Lancelot's part in the tournament, and believed he had been unfaithful to her. Lancelot however had not reciprocated the love of the maiden of Ascalot, but he grieved at the tidings of Guinevere's attitude towards him. He was unable to attend the tournament at Thanebourg but another was soon announced to be held at Camelot.

Arthur, returning to Camelot, stopped en route at the Castle of Morgain la Féé, who supplied him with proofs of Lancelot's love for Queen Guinevere. Soon afterwards a knight who hated Gawain plotted to kill him with poisoned fruit,

¹ Ascalot (or Escalot) is identified with the Rock of Dumbarton in the Clyde (Welsh name Alclut). Cf. J. D. Bruce's *Mort Artu*, note p. 269. The maiden's name Elaine is first seen in Malory's work, but was very likely taken by him from some French version no longer in existence.

² Thanebourg—Edinburgh (Bruce's *Mort Artu*, note p. 271).

but Guinevere unwittingly gave this fruit to Gaheris who ate it and died. The Queen was accused of having committed the crime with intention. Mador, the brother of Gaheris, wished to engage in combat with a knight representing the Queen so as to vindicate his right to demand the Queen's punishment. While Guinevere was endeavoring to find a defender, a boat arrived at Camelot containing the dead body of the maiden of Ascalot with a letter in her hand, telling of her unrequited love for Lancelot. Gawain then said he had given false information of Lancelot's attitude towards the maiden; and Guinevere regretted that she had thought ill of her lover.

Lancelot learned of the peril in which the Queen was placed by Gaheris' death, went to Camelot, entered the lists, won the victory, and saved the Queen. Arthur, however, was still looking for proofs of Lancelot's love for Guinevere, and Agravain plotted again to help him. He soon succeeded in surprising Lancelot at a meeting with the Queen and the latter was forced to flee from the castle. Guinevere was condemned to be burnt alive, but she was rescued by Lancelot, who killed Agravain and carried the Queen to his castle of Joyeuse Garde; King Arthur besieged the castle; the fighting was severe; and Lancelot,

by an act of gallantry, saved the King from death.

After the siege had lasted six months without result, the Pope of Rome ordered King Arthur to take the Queen back again, and this was done. Lancelot left Logres (England) for the Continent, and made Bors king of Benuic (Benoic) and Lionel, King of Gaul. Arthur followed Lancelot to make war on him, and left his own kingdom in charge of his nephew Mordred. While the fighting was taking place, Mordred endeavored to make himself popular with the barons of Arthur's kingdom. He circulated a report that Arthur was dead, and plotted to make himself King, and wed Guinevere. The Queen, however, resisted, and took refuge in the Tower of London. Mordred, besieged the Tower, and the Queen sent word to Arthur to acquaint him with the situation.

Meanwhile, in the progress of the war in Gaul, Gawain challenged Lancelot to a duel, which the latter accepted unwillingly. The fight took place, and at first the advantage was with Gawain, whose strength always increased until midday. In the afternoon Lancelot wounded Gawain, who was carried from the field.

Hearing that the army of the Romans was approaching and that the Emperor claimed that

Arthur was subject to him, Arthur gave battle. The Romans were defeated and the Emperor was slain. At this time Arthur received the message from Guinevere, and he returned with his army to England. He landed at Dover, but soon thereafter Gawain died of the wound he received in the duel, and was buried at Camelot. A great battle took place near Salisbury between Arthur and Mordred, the latter having the Saxons as allies. The two leaders engaged in personal combat, Mordred was killed, and Arthur was mortally wounded. The King commanded Girflet to throw his wonderful sword Excalibur into a lake, and had to repeat his order three times before Girflet was willing to do this. When at last the sword was thus thrown into the water, a hand appeared and received it; and the hand and the sword disappeared beneath the surface. Soon afterwards a boat appeared, filled with women, in charge of Morgain la Fée, the sister of Arthur; and they took the King away.

The sons of Mordred seized the kingdom, and Guinevere took refuge in a convent, where she died. Lancelot came to England to fight the sons of Mordred, and learned of the Queen's death. The sons of Mordred were slain in battle near Winchester, and Lancelot conquered their army.

He became a hermit, but soon died at the hermitage and was buried at Joyeuse Gards.

(12)

PERLESVAUS

The romance begins by alluding to the "Graal" as the vessel into which the Saviour's blood flowed. The author is given as "Josephus" but the Welsh version says that this was not Joseph of Arimathea. The prelude says the story is about the Good Knight, pure in body and bold in heart—called Perlesvax, Pellesvaus, Percevax, Perceval (Welsh version Poredur) who was of the lineage of "Joseph of Abarimacie." This Joseph was his mother's uncle, and he kept the Grail and the Lance.

It is further stated that the hero's mother was Ygloas (or Yglais) and her brothers were the Fisher King (Welsh, Peleur) the King of the Lower Folk, Pelles, and the King of the Chastel Mortel. His father was Alain li Gros (Welsh, Earl Evrawg) who was one of twelve brothers. Perceval had a sister Dindrane (Welsh, Danbrann, Landran).

The narrative begins with a reference to the demoralization of Arthur's court on account of his lack of interest in good things. The Knights of the Round Table had dwindled from 366 to about

25. Arthur went to a chapel and hermitage for counsel, and was informed that great sorrow was over the land because a young knight had visited the Fisher King and had seen the Grail and the Lance, but had not asked any questions about them. From a damsels he learned the story of the knight, who was called Perlesvax. While yet a boy he had seen two armed knights fighting; he had killed one of them with his javelin, and had gone with the other to Arthur's court, much to the grief of his father and mother.

King Arthur returned to Cardeil (Carduel; Welsh, Caerllion) and arranged to hold court at Pannenoisance (Welsh, Penneissense) on the Welsh coast. There was a great assembly. Three damsels came with greetings from the Fisher King who was in a grievous condition because of the failure of a visitor to ask about the Holy Grail. On their way back to the Fisher King's castle they met Gauvains (Gawain; Welsh, Gwalchmai), the nephew of King Arthur. Gauvains' wanderings and adventures are detailed, until finally he arrived at the castle of the Fisher King. Here he was admitted and taken into the presence of the King who was ill, and lying on a bed. Gauvains presented to the King the sword with which John the Baptist was beheaded, which he had

obtained in the course of his journeys. He was led into a hall where he sat down to a bounteous repast with twelve ancient looking knights. Two damsels entered, one bearing the Grail and the other the Bleeding Lance; and it seemed to Gauvains as if the blood from the Lance ran into a chalice that was in the Grail. The damsels went out; and, when they returned, there seemed to be three of them, and in the midst of the Grail the figure of a child. Again the damsels went out, and again they returned and now there was above the Grail a crowned King, on a cross, with a spear in his side. The knights were distressed that Gauvains said nothing, and they finally left the room; and Gauvains lay on a couch and slept all night. In the morning he found his horse awaiting him, and he left the castle after being informed that for his lack of speaking the previous evening he could not be permitted to hear mass in the chapel.

Journeying on, he met Lancelot and told of his visit to the Grail Castle. He expressed sorrow at his omission to say what he should have said, but he took comfort in the fact that the Best Knight had already been there and had failed in like manner.

Lancelot's adventures are now told; and allusion is made to the illness of Perceval "the widow's

son," which had lasted since he was at the castle of the Fisher King, whence he had gone to the hermitage of his uncle King Pelles, for recovery. Perceval met Lancelot and fought him without recognizing him, but later learned that he was Lancelot, the son of his father's cousin, King Ban of Benoic.

Lancelot, in the course of his wanderings, came to a river whereon was a boat containing an oarsman, two knights, and a damsels holding in her lap the head of a knight. There was also another knight in the boat, who was fishing. They directed him to the nearest castle, where the Fisher King lived. He stopped at a chapel for confession, and told the hermit who was at the chapel about his love for Queen Guinevere, and was rebuked by the hermit, who told him that for this he could not see the Grail. He arrived at the castle and was taken before the Fisher King as the latter lay on his bed. They conversed about Perceval, who had been at the castle without being recognized. Lancelot was well entertained, but the Grail did not appear; and in time he made his way back to Arthur's court.

Various adventures are related of Gauvains, Lancelot, and Perceval. The latter finally came to the hermitage of King Pelles and learned that

the land of the Fisher King had been seized by the King of Castle Mortal, and that the sacred relics were no longer there, and the Fisher King himself was dead. Perceval pressed on and attacked the Grail Castle, and was in the act of capturing it when the King of Castle Mortal slew himself. Perceval took possession, and the household of the Fisher King returned; and the Grail and the Lance and the sword with which St. John was beheaded were all brought back.

Arthur heard of Perceval's victory and started on a pilgrimage to the Grail Castle with Gauvains and Lancelot, but was obliged to send Lancelot back on account of a report that the kingdom had been pillaged by Briant of the Isles and the treacherous Kay, who had slain Lohot (Welsh, Loawt or Llacheu), Arthur's son. He also heard that Queen Guinevere was dead.

When Arthur arrived at the castle which formerly belonged to the Fisher King, he visited the chapel where the Grail was kept, and saw the Fisher King's tomb. The castle had three names: Eden (Welsh, Edom), Chateau de Joie and Chateau des Armes (Welsh, Castle of Souls). At the service in the chapel the Grail appeared in five different manners—the last being in the form of a chalice. Lancelot went to Cardeil,

stopping en route at Avalon (Welsh, Avallach) where he found the Queen's body in a coffin at a chapel. Arthur and Gauvains followed in course of time. Later Arthur became suspicious of Lancelot's loyalty and cast him into prison, but afterwards released him.

The romance closes with the announcement which a mysterious voice made to Perceval, that the Grail would not long remain in its castle, but that he would soon be informed where it would be. Soon afterwards Perceval went away in a ship, and was seen no more.

THE END

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